Sink Your Teeth In

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Sink Your Teeth In

by amoralagent

Summary

"No." She admitted, sinking in her seat uncomfortably, like she'd only just settled into her body, "I have a proposition for you."

He wanted to sigh again, "Which is?"

"Ten million dollars, and complete immunity from prosecution." Will froze like he'd been hit.

"For what?"

Her eyes speared him, her words nothing more than conversational: "All you have to do, is take Hannibal out on your boat. Put blood in the water. And drop him in the ocean for the sharks."

In the Bahamas, on the island of Nassau, Will and Hannibal settle into new life. Or, try to, until an old friend tracks them down, and gives Will a huge ultimatum.

Notes

OBVIOUSLY this is inspired by the premise of Serenity (without the plot twist bullshit, so, what I wish it would've been as the dark thriller it was promoted as) and pretty much any seaside dark shows like Big Little Lies and True Detective. I've been rewatching them both, and I have been awakened.

Also, I've challenged myself to be less of a shameful prude about writing sex, so this will have a hefty amount of it, hopefully. Enjoy yourselves!

Chapter 1

...and I will kill thee and love thee after.
-William Shakespeare, *Othello (Act V, Scene II)*

Will could've fallen asleep to the lullaby rocking of the boat, the tide gentling, the sun hot on his face and his neck, his legs. His eyelids burned red as he closed them. It left his skin tacky, sun-kissed and salted by the sea, but not uncomfortable. He laid back on his deck chair and listened to the waves lap against the hull.

The sky and sea were only drawn apart by the seam of the horizon, and were otherwise entirely indiscernible. Both bright and blue and still. The very air humming with warmth, the afternoon sun high in the sky, bringing a flat, balmy heat. An easy ocean breeze alleviated it, a little, not able to do much but cool damp skin and brush past the wind-chime; a tinkling noise bringing voice to how the sun struck the water, all around him dancing with light.

It was an impossibly nice day. Probably because of that- and despite the four rods he had set up- even the fish were too relaxed to bite.

The shadow of a giant petrel crossed over the deck like a passing cloud. It was the same bird that had been following the boat for the past few hours. Now and again it landed on the top of the cabin and made a mess of the windows, but it kept the gulls at bay. Will squinted up at it.

The bird cawed, gliding. One of the rods twitched. Will's eyes snapped to it, and watched it begin to bend, the line drawing tight. Then a tug on the hook curled it forward, and Will sprang from his seat, launched himself over the filleting table dividing the deck, and unhooked it to take hold of the rod with both hands, rearing back against the pull. The two tourists he'd taken out there had since fallen asleep on the loungers, but were jolted awake by the sudden jostle of movement, crushed beer cans kicked across the sole with a rattle. The more ruddy-faced of the two- a middle-aged man who was slowly turning pink from the sun- stumbled up, catching hold of Will's bicep as he heaved the rod back: "What are you doing? I paid for that hook."

Will could feel it, a familiarity. He knew this fish: "It's him." He breathed, under strain, pulling it back once more, and docking the rod again to scramble to get the fight jacket. There was no way he'd be able to land it freehand, without being dragged overboard. He'd tried before, too many times, he wasn't going to fail again. He spoke, mostly to himself as he said: "This one's mine. I can feel it."

"Sir, we're paying you eight hundred bucks for this."

He ignored them, fixed the rod to the belt and dropped down in the nearest chair, feet braced on the boat rails, reeling it in and heaving it back and grunting as he did so. His hands shook, adrenaline thrumming under his skin. This was a trophy fish. *His* trophy fish.

It had been weeks since he'd felt that strength. And it promised a *fight*.

"Hey, that's my brother's fish."

"Get off the fucking chair."

And he wouldn't let some well-heeled tourists snatch it out from under him, no matter the cost.

"Get out of the chair and give the man the rod!"

When the second man stood up as if to wrestle it off him, Will moved too fast, and docked the rod, grabbed his belt and there was suddenly a knife in his hand. The look he gave them was dark, feral, and he held the knife up to them, which made them move back, hands up.

"Oh, man."

"Get in the hole." He said, watching them back into the cockpit, the glint of the blade enough to stun them into submission. They didn't fight, surrendering, and settling back on the chairs: "Looks like this is a trophy fish, gentlemen." He quipped, pocketing his knife and taking up the rod again, "Sit back and enjoy the show, huh?"

They offered nothing but flat reproach, resigned and fed up.

After a drag of minutes, reeling and pulling, putting his full weight into the catch, Will had gotten it within a few feet of the boat. Sweat made his shirt become subcutaneous, plastering to his back, translucent. He pushed the hair off his forehead: "Come on, *come on*." He clamped the rod to the belt, held it steady as it got nearer and nearer, the dark shape of the creature approaching fast, and he could see the glimmer of its scales and sharp spines through the crystal clear water.

The tuna, bigger than any he'd ever seen, sidled up against the boat, wire pulled taut, creaking. Slowly, gently, Will picked up a thick metal hook in his spare hand. Held it steady. Pulled it tight. Readied his arm to gore it.

"If you think we're paying you a single dollar for this fucking fiasco, you're sorely mistaken." One of the men spat, both barging past him on the pier as he docked the boat. Will sighed hotly, tying the rope tight enough to burn his calloused hands.

He jumped back on deck, took a breath and moved into the shadow of the cabin. Knife in hand, he opened the freezer and pulled out a couple of groupers, slamming it shut and tossing them onto the filleting table before stripping himself of his sweat-soaked shirt, dropping it to the floor with a wet thud. Like clockwork, he lowered a bucket in the water, brought it back up and washed his hands with it, wiping his face and the back of his neck. He pushed his hair off his forehead and began cutting up the fish, slimy and cold, taking off the heads and removing their guts into another bucket. Blood and saltwater slicking his hands.

Dropping the chunks of meat in with the guts, that had accumulated in a mix of watery blood, he moved onto the next fish, and didn't even realise he had company until he recognised the

shadow being cast across the decking towards him. He glanced up, sighed, then went back to work, digging the knife in behind the fish's gills.

"I'm growing increasingly fond of the way you say hello to me, Will." Hannibal greeted, standing on the pier in the sun. Beige chinos and billowy blue dress shirt, hair gold and silver, pristine, formidable. Will ignored him, slicing out the intestines, "I heard you just pulled a knife on some paying customers."

Will sighed again, washing his hands in the water bucket, "They didn't pay."

"I don't blame them." He offered, inclining his head, "Have you ever thought about taking a course in customer relations?"

If Will was in a better mood, perhaps he would've laughed, "They ruined the catch. They didn't want to stay still, knocked a beer can into the water, and the fish got away." He huffed again, aggravated- hot and tired, "They're lucky all I did was *show* them the knife."

Hannibal sniffed a laugh, smiling, hands in his pockets; admiring the sunlit sheen of Will's torso, musky scents, then cast his eyes out to sea. The beach was well-populated, resplendent bodies soaking up the sunshine, with yachts and surfboards dotting the shoreline by the dozen. There was a fishing trawler far off in the distance being swarmed by seabirds. They circled overhead like vultures too, gathering by the pier and perching on the lantern hooks to spy.

He looked back to Will as he finished packing away the rods, lingering by the cockpit doors. He turned back to look at him, expectant, and Hannibal stepped forward: "Permission to come aboard?"

Considering him for a moment, unreadable, Will nodded. By the tilt to his tensed shoulders, his anger was finally easing off. Hannibal stepped onboard. The metallic smells of blood and fresh fish tinted the air around the unmistakable scent of Will, heady and masculine, flavoured by brine. He was careful not to slip on the vinegary blood as he moved to the cabin.

It was the same boat they'd left America in- more of a yacht-like power boat than a fishing one, no sails to fuss with, a good-sized cabin flanking the helm, to host guests and tourists, with an upper deck above it for a lookout. Sliding wooden slatted doors separated the sole from the interior; a little hatch inside led down to a lower deck that held the bedroom and small kitchen. They were the only ones that had ever been down there.

Truthfully, it was spacious enough to live in, and Will had thought enough about it. Old, battered, in need of a repaint, but clean and homely enough to not be entirely ostracised from the rest of the suspiciously clean cruisers and sailboats along the pier. It suited Will perfectly.

If Will wasn't the captain, with his reputation as such a good fisherman well known, people would have listened to the asocial, unfriendly attitude both he and the boat exuded, and stayed away. In a lot of ways, he was more comfortable in there than an actual house, and disliked guests in general, even if they were paying him handsomely.

Whenever he was allowed on, Hannibal could see and smell Will far more on the boat- his own unfettered space, practical and solitary. Domestically messy. Almost ascetic, in such a way that didn't seem stringent or crude. It was just him. Overwhelmingly.

Hannibal rarely went out with him, but he was the only person who didn't feel like an intruder.

Hannibal held his gaze as he came over to him, calmly as you would an animal, and Will only welcomed the approach when he was in touching distance, sighing to release the tension in his shoulders. He rolled his neck like it was on a broken hinge. Leaning into the touch when Hannibal bought a hand up to hold his jaw, fingers below his ear, Will's expression softened: "You never come down here."

"I prefer allowing you your own space."

"I've been gone three days."

Hannibal admired him closely- no shred of being upset, only gentleness, and gratitude in seeing him. He wanted to lean in and kiss the salt off his collarbone, on his neck, bite down. His thumb wiped over his cheekbone, "You're often in a better mood after you've been out to sea by yourself."

Will cracked a fleeting smile, bitter, "But not today."

"No. But that's not to say I'm not happy in your company." He conceded, a small, fond smile of his own, his close attention making Will's skin bristle. Even the tiniest reminders of being accepted, even when sweaty or moody or ill, were still so flattering- like he'd never received a genuine compliment in his life. He flattened a hand on Hannibal's chest without looking at him, his skin warm underneath the fabric of his shirt, sighed. With his emotions so raw and with the small time they'd spent separated, it was hard to predict his responses. But Hannibal spoke anyway, lower: "It's good to see you out here, where you seem more like yourself. You look beautiful, Will."

Will's eyes were glazed and indistinct, like he'd smelled smoke. Like they were in a room on fire. He moved away from Hannibal, scratched his cheek where his hand had been. After a moment, he asked, "Is that why you came down here: to gawk? If not to enjoy the smell of rotting fish?" There was a glint to his eye when he turned around, mischievous, and Hannibal exhaled, smiled.

"Am I not allowed to enjoy both?" Will glanced at him, amused, carded a hand through his hair. Without a word, he bent down and heaved the hatch door open. When he looked up again, his eyes were narrow-focused, intense. He raised his eyebrows, feigning innocence, posing a question he already knew the answer to. Hannibal smiled with his eyes, moved within arm's length, "Do you plan on sparing the rotting fish the sight of our flirtations?"

His tongue darted out to wet his lips, mulling it over, then shrugging, not taking his eyes off him, "Something like that."

And with that, he avoided Hannibal's hands and disappeared down below deck. And, as it was in his nature, Hannibal followed him.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> *Will was nowhere in sight. He'd pursued him quickly- only six stairs to descend, few places to hide in such a small area- and yet, he was hiding.*

> An ambush, a fight, a reunion, all happen at once. Will has trouble deciding which he enjoys the most.

Hannibal had forgotten how cramped it was, the tightness of the space having resulted in the first of their touches- the settling domesticity giving way to the inescapable beginning of their intimacy. After the dragon, stitched up and unsteady, between the haze of drugs and the tumble of the ocean. Forced to share the cramped twin-sized mattress when both Hannibal, and then the weather, had ruled out the cabin sofas.

Space between them brought in coldness and unspoken tension, the accidental brush of a hand or tap of a heel suddenly electrifying and bringing in waves of shared thoughts, until they were no longer accidental brushes, but embraces and reciprocated cuddling, wrapped in the excuse of keeping warm. Wounds stitched and washed, tended to, clinical then reassuringly soft and cradling.

Eventually, after weeks, nearing Cuba, it was Will who put an end to Hannibal's teasing game, by making the final grand gesture of taking the hand that was pretending to be mindlessly stroking over his stomach scar, and pushing it down the front of his boxers. He came with sweet shock, shaking, still catching his breath as he twisted round to touch his lips to Hannibal's, just once, so brief.

Will was nowhere in sight. He'd pursued him quickly- only six stairs to descend, few places to hide in such a small area- and yet, he was hiding. It wasn't hard to smell him, but his smell had managed to creep in everywhere, so Hannibal was set to a disadvantage. He wasn't spared the time to think, walked over to the bed, and suddenly he was shoved onto it, turned over only for Will to land on his chest.

A quick, half-hearted struggle, and Will caught his wrists and pushed them to his sternum. His grip was bruising. Hannibal didn't fight him.

His knees had landed by his shoulders, thighs trapping his arms. If the weight of him hadn't knocked the wind from his lungs, the sight of him would've- his skin gleaming, hair dark and wet framing his face, lips parted as he breathed.

He watched his face twitch into a curious scowl. Carefully, he let go of one of Hannibal's wrists to touch his mouth. Pushed inside to feel teeth, sharp, dangerous, and have his tongue press to the pad of his finger.

It was too easy of a distraction.

With one hand freed, and a unexpected surge of energy, Hannibal threw Will sideways, flipping them over, and had Will's fly undone, shorts open, and mouth on him fast enough for Will left able to do nothing but choke; he squeezed his eyes shut, and gulped air, and scrabbled for something to hold onto in a panic when Hannibal swallowed him down to his balls in one sudden motion, scorchingly hot, and wet, and tight, vicelike- he could've blacked out at the sensation.

"Hannibal--" He arched his back without thinking, pushed his heels onto Hannibal's spine. Will wanted to kick and fight and get away, and give way entirely, in the same sudden instinct. It was too much, too soon. But perfection. All at once.

It didn't take long before Hannibal was over him, stripped bare, taking him with as much passion as the first time. He isolated the action of his pelvis to slap against Will's thighs, pulling low noises from his throat like an animal. Will snarled against his cheek, pulling him flush. He fell onto his elbows to cage him in, fold his legs up: "Oh *God*- I'm-- *ah*, please!-"

Will panted when he curled over him and pushed his hands into the mattress either side of his head, and watched him cover his face with his arm as he groaned, writhed. He bit into the flesh of his forearm, muffling his moans.

Then Will breathed a whine, tensed, put the heel of his hand on his chest as if to push him away, and his hands and feet went cold as he continued to come, release tearing itself from him like twin rivers rushing. His heart thrummed in his ears when he paused his breath to hear, to see, to feel, catching Hannibal in an crushing embrace as he pushed inside him one last time, kissed him hard- finally. He could've ripped him apart. He felt his orgasm as his own.

He knew what it was like to drown. It too, felt like drowning.

Heat and light. Sweat and spit and semen, sticky between their thighs, like nectar. Hot breath all around him. God in the air.

Then the air around them swooped in to cool him when Hannibal pulled out and took his weight off him, quickly replaced with him against his back when he rolled over. He mostly slept on his front, and planned to do just that. But Hannibal wouldn't let him go that easily, and Will let him kiss his shoulder blades, up to his neck, push a strong thigh between his own- his body bearing down on his like a hunting animal sprawled over it's quarry. Possessive. Dominant.

Hannibal's hand traced the dips of his ribs, the notches of his spine, then pushed lower, until Will flinched, hissed, growled and sighed into the mattress when he moved to feel what he'd just done. Will might've let him take him again, if he wanted to. Just the thought of it made him ache slightly.

The desire between them was practically sateless- teenage, even. But soreness and oversensitivity had already made his brain fog up. He was hardly coherent enough to form sentences.

Judging by his silence- spare post-verbal grumbles, pleased purr-like sounds resonating from his chest like a big cat- Hannibal was in a similar state.

Lips replaced a hand on the back of his neck. Will hummed when Hannibal settled over him, his weight heavy and comfortable, as compressing and as warm as an embrace. He wanted to be soldered head to foot. He wanted to feel his weight on top of him, unendingly, forever.

Halfway to sleep, their arousal ebbing into the room around them like steam- air pungent with smells and pheromones- Will managed to mumble: "I missed you."

Syllables blurred together. Hannibal understood him, sliding his right hand up to lace their fingers together as a way to return the sentiment.

When they woke up some time later, their hands were still intertwined, and the slits of windows above them spoke of an evening sky. Pinkish golden light cut in, soft and fraying at the edges.

Will sighed gently, hating the boat for having no proper bathroom. He would've loved nothing more than to slide properly into bed and sink back into sleep, the promise of a good shower welcoming them both whenever they decided to reemerge.

Whenever they were at sea, they'd washed their faces and hair in the kitchen sink, took turns below deck to clean the essential parts of their bodies- with wipes, or a flannel, or whatever was available, soap. Despite being able to go a long while without showering- three weeks if he was in a real downswing- the inability to have a decent clean even started to irk Will.

Upon hitting dry land and finding the house, it was always one of the first things they did. If both of them weren't so exhausted, it would've turned into something else. It only ever did when they'd got to Indonesia about two years ago, but that was a different time. They'd come to Nassau to let the bodies in their wake go cold.

They got to the island safely, and Will had a bath the next day to calm his aching muscles and feel cleansed once again, and had never felt so fresh in his life. No wonder the ancient cultures felt it to be a religious experience. It was heavenly. Peaceful, too. Up until he dragged Hannibal in on top of him.

It had been a few days since his last shower, plus the humidity and the sex, so he was quietening the urge to shed his skin then and there. He could've popped back to the house at any point previously, but he didn't. In part, because he had always wondered what Hannibal did when he left, and he didn't want to ruin the mystery.

They were both solitary creatures, and time spent apart didn't mean separation. If anything, it made the reunion better.

But Will had probably begun to push his luck.

He was spending more time away than not. Hannibal coming all the way down to the pier affirmed his suspicion, and he'd jumped to sex to forbid the conversation from taking that turn. And he knew Hannibal was smart enough to see straight past it.

He stirred, stretching his legs a little, feeling achy, and Hannibal shifted on top of him, easing off. Will got out from underneath him and felt wetness spill between his thighs when he sat up. He stretched his arms up, his shoulder muscles seizing. Hannibal stroked a hand up his back. He sighed, smiled, "Maybe I should disappear more often."

The mattress dipped and one hand joined the other to massage Will's shoulder: "Maybe I should visit the pier more often."

"Hoping to improve my customer relations?" Will winced and wriggled out of his hold when he gripped a little too hard in response; turned to kiss him, twice. He could've lost himself in it, roll over, and fall, all over again. He smiled into it, pushed him down, before getting up.

The island was all palm trees, and colourful painted houses, and seascapes whichever direction you looked. Rickety fruit markets riddled with flies. Corner shops without air conditioning that sold anything you could ever need. Bars everywhere, the nightlife wild and nocturnal.

The fishing business was booming, and tourists swarmed in to go deep sea diving, or trophy fishing. The coral reefs were a huge attraction. Will fished for blue and white Marlins, amberjacks, and sailfish- the occasional barracuda. But mainly tuna and swordfish. He sold to the local fishery, and sometimes brought a few home.

In some cruel twist of irony, their house turned out to be right on top of a cliff. Next to a lighthouse.

It was chalk, a straight drop down. Will made a habit of running along it's edge.

A lot of the time, he imagined running straight off.

They were an odd kind of happy. It was fragile- Will spent most of his waking moments fishing, and if not fishing, he was running. Hannibal was unabashedly himself; stripped down suits, same bourgeois cooking. Overly domestic but certainly not domesticated. But they hadn't killed anyone since they got there. It was only a matter time, and Will didn't like waiting.

Honestly though, Will liked his lack of personality change, because as much as he adapted to fit, he remained entirely Hannibal. Where Will could be neurotic and restless, anxious, Hannibal was placid and easy. He didn't have to worry about how he felt or what he knew and what he didn't. He could read him like a book. It went both ways. Their relationship was grounding- hell, even the act fucking on an unmoored boat was grounding, somehow.

He acted as Will's tether. Like rope tying the boat to the pier. No matter how far he tried to stray, and even if he tried to burn the rope that bound him, his path always wound back to

Hannibal. Always had. Maybe he was starting to get sick of it.

Or maybe, as he liked to think, he was just going a little stir-crazy.

Or, as his brain supplied, maybe not.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

"Maybe you could relearn some manners."

Will stopped mid-chew, blinked at him.

They get invited to a party. Hannibal plans for more than just social niceties.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"We've been invited to a party."

"By we, you mean you. Right?"

Hannibal smiled, taking up his glass of apricot juice, "No. They've invited us both, I'm sorry to say."

Will sighed as he forked some eggs: "You've already agreed?"

"It would've been rude to decline." He had a look in his eyes, amused, having agreed knowing full-well the irritation it would cause Will. Will fixed him with a glare, "What do you think?"

"I think I would rather stick needles in my eyes." He mused, "Or your eyes."

Hannibal didn't respond to that: "Your social interactions have ceased to hooked fish and sea birds, Will."

"And *you*." Will corrected, "That's more than enough."

Hannibal grinned, considered him, watching him eat, "It could be good for you to integrate yourself back into polite society." He thought Will would sigh again, but he didn't: "Maybe you could relearn some manners."

Will stopped mid-chew, blinked at him.

"You mean, I *can't* pull my knife on anyone?" He asked, flatly incredulous, swallowing and sitting back with his drink, "That sounds boring to you as you say it. I think I'll pass." He moved to get up.

"Whoever said anything about the evening lacking violence?"

That stopped him in his tracks. There it was; the truth of the proposal. He turned around to him, noticeably taken aback. He was saying what he thought he was saying. Will sighed again, but entirely unable to help his interest piquing. He put his glass down on the kitchen counter.

He had to be careful with his words. He looked away, thinking, then frowning: "Do you intend it as a *bonding* activity?"

Hannibal's smile returned, getting up to collect their plates, "If you like."

They hadn't hunted together in months. Bodies that were bones now. They hadn't since they got there, like some unspoken pact. But Hannibal hadn't made any promise to stop, and Will didn't ask him to.

Hannibal rounded the counter with the plates, and Will leant on it, watching him. He could drop a bombshell like that, and then ignore him to go and clean the dishes. No surprise there.

Finishing his drink, he followed him around the counter, and put it beside the sink before placing a hand on Hannibal's scarred wrist to snatch his attention back: "What's your plan, then?"

He looked down at Will's fingers on his forearm curiously, acting coy, like he hadn't been planning it all for a full week in advance. It wasn't a matter of fighting for Will's approval or participation anymore- they'd do it together or not at all. That had been decided years ago.

He then offered Will a sly smile, and said: "I plan to toast the happy couple."

Will decided he'd stay home for a couple of days, mainly for mentally preparing himself for the outing. The social part of it would be bad anyway, and coming back from fishing in the sun all day would've made it into a nightmare. As surprised as he was, Hannibal was glad for it. He'd expected Will to scarper as soon as he finished his breakfast, and purposefully get wound up in a fishing trip, or nightly storm, going as far as to put himself at risk so he didn't have to go. It wouldn't be the first time.

He'd done worse things for the sake of good excuses.

Even without work, he'd managed to evade spending too much time at the house. He stayed in the garden after breakfast, went running shortly after, came back and kissed Hannibal, only to disappear again. His energy was so fidgety and unsettled Hannibal just wanted to take hold of him, strap him down, lock him in a room- but that would just have him climbing up the walls literally instead of figuratively, he supposed.

Despite being able to read him, even Hannibal was stumped as to what was causing him to be so absent.

In the first months of settling there he would hardly leave the house, and suddenly it was the last place in the world he wanted to be. He was losing ways to broach the subject without the outcome being either hostile or sexual. First the distant behaviour, then the tourist incident.

He hadn't been hesitant when it came to the idea of killing after quite a long time. Unpredictable creature.

He'd stopped trying to ask- figured Will would open up eventually, or he'd find out somehow. Patience wasn't all that hard when it came to Will.

Hannibal sat in bed reading as Will got a shower. Outside, the sunset lit up the sky in carnal reds and blinding orange, the sea a fluttering mirror, radiant and gorgeous; so picturesque it seemed like you could run your fingers across it and it would smudge like paint. The palm trees shook in the wind, and Will had mentioned he felt there would be a storm coming. He was probably right. He was usually right about that sort of thing.

When Will came out of the bathroom, a trail of steam came out with him, and he was stood in it's fog, dripping wet, like a male siren. Sublime. He padded over to collect some boxers and one of Hannibal's sweaters he'd folded on top of the drawers, wiped himself over with the towel from around his waist, before pulling it on. A smile touched Hannibal's face, still warmed by even his most thoughtless gestures.

Will felt the weight of his gaze, and turned to him: "Hello there."

"Hello, Will." Hannibal could smell his soap, shampoo-- and something saltier. He glanced down, and the tenting of fabric confirmed his suspicions. Will stood where he was, quirked a brow. Such wandering eyes, "Is there something I can help you with?"

Will quelled a smile, something indiscernible in his expression, "I think you can judge for yourself."

"Are you coming to bed?" Hannibal remained passive, his book left open in his lap- as if he could refocus on it. Will looked at it, at the empty space in the bed next to him. Scowled at him.

"Are you coming onto me, Doctor Lecter?"

"Would you like me to?" Will did smile at that, a chuckle startled from him like a cough.

He walked over to stand beside him, hazel eyes amber in the bedside lamplight as he looked up at him. Without hesitation, he threw his leg over and just like that, he was straddling his lap, right on top of his book. Hannibal leant back against the headboard, revering, and slid one solid hand to his thigh, up his side, under the back of the sweater to rest there. Will sighed, watched his chest move as he breathed, touched his collarbone like he would hook his fingers around it.

"Recently-" Will started, stopped, worked his jaw fruitlessly. Voice quieter when he next spoke: "Sometimes I want to hurt you."

Hannibal's face didn't change: "Why don't you?"

Their eyes met and snagged. Will's hand moved up to his jaw, thumb by the corner of his mouth, and, in a movement too subtle to see but present enough to feel, Hannibal tilted his

head back. The emotions whirring in Will were implacable. Unpredictable. But his body gave him away, the damp patch on his boxers as he pushed his hips down, his scent.

Will surged forward and caught his mouth in a kiss, Hannibal's other hand finding his back.

The next morning, Will woke up with a start, dreams fizzing out of his memory, and found himself alone. Squinting at the alarm clock, it was only a little past five in the morning- still dark out. The mattress was lukewarm where it was empty. He sighed, laid on his back to stare at the ceiling.

When he closed his eyes, the images appeared of how Hannibal had been: powerful yet submissive underneath him, teeth bared in a snarl when they ended up on the floor like animals, his plush mouth slack-jawed as Will's hands tightened on his throat. Hands hitting the headboard, leaving prints against the mirror.

Will's feet came off the floor as he laid over him, fucking him, pushing himself right up to the shaking, sweating precipice, only to hold himself at the base to stop it dead. By the time he'd sated Hannibal, more than once, and bruised his neck, his thighs, scratched his flanks raw, his own body much in the same state, Will was nearly delirious, head spinning in the anticipation, and came hard and sobbing inside him when Hannibal suddenly took hold of him and latched his teeth into his shoulder. His whole body felt alight, burning white heat, chills shooting from his hips to his scalp like he'd come apart at the seams.

He looked back up at the ceiling in the dark, feeling tightness coil in his abdomen in preparation for arousal. He calmed it. Hannibal's submission wasn't a new development- neither was the intertwined violence, really.

But it was a heady reminder of power. It let Will know that he'd let him do anything he wanted. Anything.

He got up, put on whoever's boxers he found on the floor. He tracked Hannibal downstairs, in the lounge, next to the fireplace. He'd redressed in the same sweater Will had tried to steal before.

Normally, he would've poured Will a glass if he'd expected to be followed, but he hadn't, and turned to look at Will plainly. Neither embarrassed nor ashamed. Firelight trapped itself in his barely touched drink nestled in his lap, licked at his features. The marks on his neck. Sparked in his eyes, full of desire and deep thought as they waited for Will to talk.

To stop his staring, Will wiped his eye with the back of his hand, leant against the doorframe, "And there I was thinking I'd tired you out." He sighed, smiled, then: "I thought you'd realised that you can't sneak away from me."

Hannibal just looked at him, innocent, "Is that what I was doing?" There was no humour there.

The distance between them seemed wrong. He crossed his arms when Hannibal looked back at the fire and sipped his drink.

Will frowned, pulled a face as he tilted his head, "What would you call it? Coming down here in the night to, what, *brood?"* It hadn't happened before. Three difficult years since the dragon- far more so, with Will's alcoholism, the wounds, trying to kill each other in the early stages as they did before their implausible deliverance from the Atlantic- and Hannibal hadn't done it before. Or, Will hadn't caught him. He often got up early to do some extravagant breakfast, or begin butchering the body from the previous night, but never to just-- sulk. It wasn't the sex. That's the last thing it would be about: "What are you doing?"

"I find the warmth of a fire hospitable. Fire holds memories as easily as it destroys them." He divulged, blank. Will couldn't tell if that was supposed to be a veiled criticism or not. Hannibal stared at the flames, shadows making him look broader and carved, took a drink, wet his lips: "Unspoken words taking shape in smoke."

Even after everything they'd been through- marriage, too- it seemed ridiculous for him to decide to be closed off now. It's like he was forgetting who he was talking to, sharing a bed- a home- with. All that they shared between them.

But it still could be undone.

And he would *let* Will do it.

Will sighed, pressed: "You can talk to me."

"When?"

"I'm sorry?"

"When would you like me to talk to you, Will?" He said, casual, non-threatening, not even a hint at any emotion. Will knew what he meant to say. It was a way of complaining about his distant behaviour without actually doing so- nothing could be straight forward, of course. It wasn't exactly coming out of nowhere, but Will was still rubbed the wrong way by it.

If he was mad, Hannibal wouldn't make a show of it. His anger was mute. This was something akin to dissatisfaction, disappointment. Worry.

He opened his mouth to talk and dithered, looked off, then met his eyes again, his brow still furrowed, quietly offering: "I'm here now."

"Is that a consolation?" He spoke to the fire, not deigning to look at him, "Do I wait around until you decide grace the world with your presence, or do I act?"

"Act?" Will raised a brow, genuinely surprised.

So it was a choice between accepting Will's behaviour no matter how badly it impacted on him, or-- *acting*. Murder, mortally wounding, manipulation, who knew. Possibly something good and healthy, like, God forbid, getting him a dog or doing some kind of love gesture to keep him around- but, then, that would still be manipulation. And it wouldn't be as effective. Killing Will, or unwilling victims, would both assure Will staying unequivocally. Will understood that already. He wasn't stupid.

The codependency was mutual, and Will could love it sometimes, but it didn't mean he couldn't hate it just as easily: "Act." Will repeated, exasperated, "Is that a threat to me, or a threat to someone else?"

"What would you prefer?" He looked at him like he had offered which way to cook eggs, not implied horrific violence.

After what they'd just done, and what they planned to do at the party, and the life they'd led together since the dragon, he knew Hannibal was not about to kill him over spending more time away from him that he would've liked. Maybe it was more than that- something tied up in fear of abandonment, worry of the eventual plateau that came with marriage, but that would discredit everything they were to each other. As if either of them could forget. For better, or for worse.

Will sighed, and he could've laughed. Hannibal gave him a hollow look, affectless.

At times, Will really did wonder what the fuck he'd got himself into.

"If you're not happy with me, how about you say so?" Will told him, stern, "So I'm not on eggshells around you, like-- I'm not me, and you're not you."

Hannibal seemed to take that in, vaguely. He finished his drink and set it down, admired the crystal of the tumbler glinting.

Then he stood up, one hand on the shoulder of the chair as he faced him fully, "Then, here we are, Will. Out in the open. I am me, and you are you." Hannibal said, glow of the fire on the angles of his face, voice deep and alluring, eyes empty in place of sadness: "Who loves who?"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for the such a warm and encouraging reaction to this! I appreciate it more than you know :,)

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

"I'm not smiling."

"Yes, you are."

The night of the party. Things don't go as planned.

Chapter Notes

My wit is really jumping out in this and I don't know why

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The date of the party came around far too soon. Even though, Will could wish it's delay all he wanted, and it would still, always, be too soon.

Since their not-quite-an-argument, they had managed to move on, and had honed in on each other. Will leant a hand in cooking, didn't use sex as an avoidance strategy; Hannibal tried his best not to suffocate him with attention, but failed for the most part- not that Will particularly disliked it. Will had enjoyed being around him since he met him, and he could never deny that.

Probably loved him since then too, but the statement wouldn't hold up in court.

Domesticity between them began to settle back in nicely. The tension was still there, hard discussions yet to be had, but ignored in preparation for what was to come.

That evening, Will stood in front of the mirror- glass still smudged by handprints; he'd thought of the Titanic car scene and laughed- and pulled on his suit jacket. He did the buttons up and the word *peacock* came to mind. His hair groomed back with one curl on his forehead, beard kept neat, the velvet dark green-almost-black suit jacket over the black shirt and suit trousers, tight at the waist, broad on the shoulders, perfectly fitted: he really did clean up well.

But he neglected a tie, in case he resorted to strangling himself with it.

As he fiddled with his cufflinks, Hannibal was suddenly at his back like a shadow. He felt him there before seeing him. He wore a black suit, and a crimson shirt and tie, like blood on his throat. His strength seemed to only be confirmed by the thick layers of fabric- he was wearing them, they weren't wearing him- and Will marvelled at how opposed they both were, contrasting colours, something straight out of a macabre, romantic-era painting.

He met his dark eyes in the mirror, and shook his head: "Wipe that grin off your face."

"I'm not smiling."

"Yes, you are." His eyes gave him away. He looked pleased, downright smug- the face behind the mask grinning from ear-to-ear- Will could see it clear as day. His quick observation earned a conceding hum, a study up and down. Will sighed, "What have you told these people about me?"

"They know you as my partner. A fisherman- not much else. Your mystery enthrals them."

Will raised his eyebrows expectantly, "Do they know my name?" Hannibal had the perchance for neglecting to use his alias- *Hannibal* was an instantly recognisable name; *Will* could be anyone. A dime a dozen. Boy next door. He'd been schooled enough for it, but it didn't stop him, because he loved Will's name in his mouth more than anything else.

Well, *almost* anything else.

"Yes." Hannibal replied easily, and Will sighed his disapproval, about to argue with him, but Hannibal came around to face him, taking his wrist to do up his other cuff. He couldn't blame him, really. He'd been calling him all kinds of different names for the best part of a year, he'd expected it to slip. It was a low risk of recognition considering how long it had been since they were even in the top five of the most wanted list, let alone written about in the worldwide media.

Not that it would matter if someone did know them. It would be the first for a long time, but nothing new. First come, first served.

"At least next time you do it, you'll be really sorry." He met his eyes, and Hannibal's mouth quirked in a small smile.

"How are you feeling?"

"Fine. But there's plenty of time for everything to go horribly wrong." Hannibal wiped the shoulder of his suit, and undid the top button of his shirt with a flick of his fingers. A yellow-green bruise peeked out from his collar. Will averted his eyes from his reflection, from Hannibal's sharp attention.

"Are you expecting things to go horribly wrong?"

"Merely-- preparing for the worst." He rolled his shoulders, redid his top button. Hannibal took his hand afterwards, turned it over in his, then slid their fingers together to hold it.

"Why?"

"Force of habit." Hannibal kissed the back of his hand and felt him relax a little. Will looked down at their hands, those capable surgeon hands of his, veins, the glint of his ring.

If there hadn't been the promise of the hunt, he would've taken his hand and slowly put his finger in his mouth, and made him forget about the evening entirely. Alas.

On the way over there- in a Bentley, what else- Hannibal slid a hand onto the inseam of Will's thigh. A touch that would appear violating or inappropriate if anyone was to bare witness to it. Something to help him stay in the moment, to keep him with him, maybe even to stir him up. He felt the warmth of his palm through his trousers. Will closed his eyes, rested his head back, and took a breath, placing a hand over his knuckles. Dusk was quickly vanishing into night.

Driving past the sea, blackened by the sky and illuminated by oil lamps, Will fought with the urge to push Hannibal's fingers higher between his legs- but then they'd fleetingly touch one another all night, a hand to the back, an arm around hips, squeeze of a hand, and they'd be seen in watchful eyes as that opulent insatiable couple who had an esoteric yet enviable bond; people would imagine what they'd do to each other in private, how they wanted to see, think about it in their shameful, lurid dreams.

He'd touched himself to the thought of he and Hannibal together, long before it happened, in the dark of his bed after therapy, apologetically and sickened as he did in the shower after a case- never told him; would never tell anyone. He wouldn't be exactly offended if other people saw them together and did just that. He wasn't sure if he really enjoyed the thought, had never considered exhibitionism, *actually*, what if he *could*--

Will felt that familiar twist of warmth in his stomach and pushed Hannibal's hand away. He didn't know what had gotten into him. Perhaps he was mistaking anxiety and anticipation for arousal- it was probably both, knotted up in each other. It was like his body was willing to go to all lengths to bar him from attending the evening, and it immediately went to: *quickly! I need to be fucked!* ...At least it wasn't nausea.

The party was at a huge clifftop beach house, lit up like a beacon, a structure that looked closer to a set of storage boxes than a house. All glass wall windows and giant slabs of marble and rooms that spilt outside like cardboard boxes left open-ended. It was fastidiously contemporary, something Hannibal could admire, and Will could feel entirely out of place in.

And he did. He was dressed to fit, all pearls and gold, evening gowns, shiny suits. They were handed glasses of sparkling wine upon entering, servants with canapés milling around the stifling crowds of perfumed attendees; disembodied classical music ebbed and flowed around the conversations like silk.

An affluent woman Hannibal normally met around the fresh fish markets had invited them. Something to do with a private art exhibition she was attending, contributing to, in the wake her stepson's engagement; it would be raising money for the wedding, full of the high-profile and highly-prestigious, pretentious, synonyms- so on and so forth. The woman in question greeted Hannibal warmly, kiss on both cheeks, regal and rich and classically bourgeois. Will kindly took her thin hand in greeting when he was introduced, finding it within him to curb

his energy into smiling when given a compliment, chuckling at jokes, nodding along. Polite conversation. Menial and shallow, and fucking insufferable.

It wasn't long- the best part hour, at most- before Will came back from the bathroom and Hannibal was off making friends elsewhere, leaving him to suffer their avid attention. But, as it turned out, Will was far more invested in trying not to down the flutes of champagne as soon as he got hold of them. He turned on the charm easily enough, and listened to them intently as a friend.

They were chatting- mainly amongst themselves- about one controversy or another. One of the attending artist's had a rumoured explicit liaison, so they pointed out an attractive woman, continued gossiping as he feigned interest, until one of the men- barefaced, glasses, navy suit- turned to Will.

"Your husband informs me you have quite a passion for fishing, Mister Graham."

Graham. Mister *Graham*. Hannibal had told them his *full name*.

For fuck's sake.

He clenched his teeth and mentally throttled the man, sipped his drink to appear calm.

"Yes, your job is a local fisherman, down by the beach, is that right?"

"He informed you correctly." He replied, pursing his lips in a smile that looked like a grimace: "It's why I married him: quite the catch." He quipped tightly, briefly staring daggers at the back of Hannibal's head, and they laughed blindly, "Excuse me."

He slipped over and whispered something snide to Hannibal as he moved past him. He excused himself from the passing greetings and niceties to go look at some paintings on the far side of the room.

The looks he garnered of intrigue and flirtation weren't helpful- as much as they were supposed to feed his ego, they only made him uncomfortable. No glasses to hide behind, only the pleasant hum the watery alcohol tried to provide. It all made him feel more overwhelmed than he was already.

One of the women that had been amongst the greeting party followed after Will. She was born in Japan but had startlingly British accent, and was wearing a silk pantsuit. That's all he'd gathered. He hadn't caught her name, but she gave him a friendly smile as she sidled up beside him, facing a canvas that looked like a child's scribble.

"I don't want to be here." She told him after a moment, conspiratorially.

God, someone who spoke his *language* for once. It was refreshing. It made him smile into his glass.

"That makes two of us."

"I know. Samael told me you like fishing," Of course Hannibal had called himself that. Like the infernal name- the seducer, the destroyer. The archangel and the demon. Will tried not to have aneurysm, "More than you like people."

Will half-shrugged, considered the people nearby, "They're a lot-- quieter."

"And a lot less slippery." She joked, nudged him with her shoulder. He sniffed a chuckle, lightening up: "Why are you here, then? Not to buy this bullshit, I hope."

He held up his left hand to show his wedding ring, giving a bored expression, the kind reserved for like-minded friends in uncomfortable situations. She frowned back, sympathetic, "The things we do for love." He sighed, finishing his drink and instantly replacing it with a new one from one of the passing servers. She laughed at him, charmed.

"You should have that husband of yours put down." She said, suddenly serious, sipping her champagne.

It caught him off-guard for a second, but he found her to be smiling.

"I tried that." He added: "He bit the vet." She grinned wider, grew quiet as she watched him stare at the painting like he wanted to crawl inside it. He found her gaze and her company to not be half as appalling as the rest of them, and felt a sudden pang of guilt: "Sorry. I didn't catch your name."

She gave an apologetic smile, offered a hand, "Ardelia." He shook her hand, smiled, "I know what you're thinking. Latin name. It means *zealous*." She scoffed, rolled her eyes, drinking.

He met her gaze kindly, sincere: "It suits you."

She quirked a brow, boyishly charming, "Thank you." Behind Will, someone else caught her attention and she smiled, waved at them, apologised, and Will watched her scuttle off, weaving back into the crowd.

Classic. Even if they seemed to be somewhat kindred spirits, he wasn't the best company she had to enjoy. He couldn't help but feel it as a dismissal. Like the thoughtless rejection of friends he thought liked him, childlike, a horrid nostalgia. He was left cold and alone.

He felt eyes roaming all over him like insects.

Will had distanced himself altogether when Hannibal found him. He'd went outside to the pool. It overlooked a wooded area with the sea far off in the distance, walls either side of them- the warm busy light from the house illuminating his back, moonlight on his front. Will tossed the rest of his champagne into the dirt and sighed. Closed his eyes and felt the sea breeze on his face, bringing in a storm.

He didn't turn around when he heard the door sliding shut. He knew who it was.

"Needed some air?" Hannibal asked, the click of his shoes on the tile as he came towards him.

"It's stifling in there. The perfumes and the chatter make the air seem humid. Like methane."

"Light a match and watch them burn." Hannibal concurred with a private smile, moving to stand beside him. Elegant, wine in hand. Utterly composed.

"That's one way to cook them." Will supposed, knew Hannibal would smile wider at his acknowledgement.

He didn't look at him, mourned the emptiness of his glass and the impulse that had made it that way. Stared out towards the direction of the ocean.

"The largest part of what we call our personality, is our reactions in times of stress." Hannibal said after a moment, easily tact, practically bitchy, and Will saw the blow coming from a mile off: "You turn to isolation."

"And you turn to spite." Will countered, razor sharp, "I know which one I prefer." He glanced at him, his posture rod-straight, mildly offended.

Slowly, Hannibal took a drink. Took him in. Calmed himself to admit: "I prefer your spite."

Will sighed at that, the relief of coldness in his lungs, looked off into the clouded sky and sea. He wished he could hear it. The trees that reached up to greet them were whipped up in a swell of wind, dragging rainclouds inland, charged with salt and electricity.

Will looked down in to what he could make of the forest from the light of the house, and the drop looked steep. There was nothing between them and the fall- no railing, no glass: "If I said jump- would you?"

Looking from him, down into the valley, Hannibal bought his glass to his lips, then said, "We've survived greater heights." He took a sip, swallowed, mused: "There isn't much you could ask of me that I would deny you, Will."

He'd heard that sentiment enough times, never so explicitly.

And, with that, he wanted to test the theory.

"Fine. I'm going home." He told him, handing his glass over and meeting his eyes intensely, and Hannibal gave a styptic blink. Will couldn't help but grin, wolfish: "Bring me something back- a party favour." He didn't mean a painting, or a sculpture: "Consider it a gift." He instructed, placing a chaste kiss to his lips, then leaning to his ear, lowly: "Or don't come back at all."

Hannibal adjusted the grip of the glasses in his hands in place of dropping them, and stood completely still as he watched him go.

Chapter End Notes

My casting of Ardelia is Sonoya Mizuno. If you don't know who Ardelia is, you're a fool. A silly, silly fool. Just you wait to find out what on earth she's doing there.

Also beach house and boxes, see what I mean?

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Until then, he figured he would get changed and sleep off the drink, getting up from the couch to do just that.

The sharp and unmistakable noise of a key sliding in the front door changed his mind.

They haven't killed anyone in a long time. That is set to change. Will has mixed feelings on the matter.

Chapter Notes

(sorry for the lack of update I was busy having a crisis lol) (it's all good now, glad we're all still here, hope you enjoy)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will took a cab back, sunk into the seat and sighed when it pulled away from the house. He could feel anxiety peel away from him like melting wax. He closed his eyes, tiredness behind his face warred with the anticipation in his gut.

He wouldn't call it excitement- too good and pleasant of a word for something so dark- it felt closer to the crippling nausea of fear than it did happiness. Not that he wasn't looking forward to what would happen. His body knew the adrenaline, knew the thrill of the kill, like a hunter, an animal.

Guilt came, if it came at all, much later. Intertwining images of a severed human leg when cutting the head off a fish, the smell of blood at sea reminding him of hands scrabbling on the tiled floors, smears of red, warm and viscous; pleading, incoherent faces that all blurred together as some ambiguous victim, screams like the cries of gulls, the kind of thing nightmares are made of.

As soon as he got back, he shrugged off his jacket and threw it on the back of the couch, flicked on the lights, and went straight to the drinks cabinet. He needed something to calm

him just enough. Nerves converged as a hard mass in his stomach.

There was no doubt in his mind that Hannibal would come back. Maybe he'd leave it a few hours too late, just to make him worry, but he'd return to him. It was only a matter of time.

He lamented the fact that there were no dogs to greet him upon his return, to have in solitude's stead as he waited. They used to help dispose of the aftermath. Chew on or bury the bones in the garden. Once he'd set their dogs on someone back in Cuba, watched them shred flesh from bone. It had been a spectacle. The snapping jaws, the ripping tendons and skin, the whites of their teeth, their eyes. Blood everywhere. Staining fur, the walls- hot and cloying on their tongues.

He wondered if a similar instance would happen when Hannibal arrived home with whoever he'd decided to bring with him. He wondered if they'd give way to impulse, and tear limb from limb. They'd been keeping so quiet. So well-behaved. Eating fish and seafood for so long.

Meat would finally be back on the menu.

He poured himself another drink when he instantly shot back the first, then went and sat in one of the armchairs. The alcohol gave relief to his muscles and calmed his head like a fog. He was ready. The light of the kitchen illuminated him a little, caught in his eyes and his glass. He didn't light the fire.

He'd wait in the semi-dark. With the moon as his only company.

Night crept on unhurried, and Will was debating whether to go to bed or not, the whiskey and thinning patience making him tired. He wouldn't mind being woken up, startled awake. In fact, it wouldn't surprise him if Hannibal tried to call his bluff, and didn't return for a few days. When he finally did, there would be blood. *That could be fun*. Until then, he figured he would get changed and sleep off the drink, getting up from the couch to do just that.

The sharp and unmistakable noise of a key sliding in the front door changed his mind.

A click of the lock, a push, and it gently swung open. But there was no one there.

Silence, followed by the noises of a car opening and closing, a shuffle of movement, crunching gravel, and footsteps approached. Will just stood where he was, tumbler in hand, obscured by the darkness as Hannibal appeared in the doorway. He stopped and they looked at each other.

He was carrying a body over his shoulder. Like it was nothing.

They were wrapped in Will's old sleeping bag- God knows where he'd excavated that from- and, considering the lack of movement, they were unconscious. Will just looked at him, took a deep breath just short of a gasp, fiddled with his glass. Hannibal offered him nothing but flat objectivity as he looked away from him, placing the victim-to-be down on the floor. Throwing them down on the tile could've resulted in a disappointingly early death.

He slammed the door shut behind him, watched the weighty sleeping bag begin to wriggle on the floor, and looked up to Will. Shadowy, only slightly visible but entirely suave, Will didn't make any move to stay or go. Hannibal could smell him as piercingly as an animal would a mate. The sleeping bag groaned by his feet, and he shrugged off his suit jacket to hang it up with Will's discarded one.

"Observing or participating?"

A slow, genuine smile crept onto Will's face. He couldn't help it. The first and only time Hannibal had asked him that, he'd pointed out to him that it was a trick question. Hannibal had smiled, and wordlessly handed him the knife.

This time, he wasn't trying to catch him out. They understood each other perfectly. But he answered anyway: "Observing." He said, crossing the room to get another drink, the body on the ground between them.

He poured two glasses, felt Hannibal's eyes on his forearms where he'd rolled up his sleeves, on his neck. He left the second glass where it was for him to collect, took up his own. Their dinner guest began scrabbling and trying to find the zip, or some kind of opening, voice muffled as they were calling out for help- a man's voice.

Will found that to be a relief; some part of him wondered if Hannibal would take a low blow and bring home anyone he'd talked to that wasn't him. Wouldn't be the pettiest thing he'd done.

Swilling his drink, he stared down at the contorting mass. The formless juts of hands and feet, the hissing sound of nails scratching against fabric. It was weird to know it was a person in there. Without the confused voice, the sight of it made Will think of a bagful of puppies, thrown in a river to drown.

Instead of retrieving a weapon from the kitchen, or already having one on his person, Hannibal went back to where he'd hung up their jackets. He patted them down, searching, like he'd misplaced something.

Then, as if he'd just read Will's mind, they looked at each other curiously, and Hannibal put a hand in the inner pocket of Will's suit, and pulled out a folding knife. He looked intrigued, and... *proud*. Will gave a half-shrug- *don't act so surprised*- coy, unfazed.

Without further ado, Hannibal went over to their guest, flicked the blade out, and asked Will: "Shall we get started, then?"

"Of course."

In one sudden movement, Hannibal stabbed the sleeping bag, and cut through it cleanly like he was disembowelling a swine. What a waste of perfectly good camping equipment. The act revealed the man inside, his hands flying up to poorly shield his face, sweating, scared. A ring glinted.

An engagement ring. *Ah*.

He squirmed out of the confines, lint and cotton around him like rubble, squinting up at the light, up at Hannibal where he stood over him. He shuffled backwards, bruising his elbows on the tiles in his hurry, started to beg: "Please-- I'll give you *anything* you want- just, please don't hurt me, *I'll*--" His head knocked into one of the dining chairs abruptly and swore, and Hannibal tilted his head, like a corvid spotting blood.

"I think you'll find it quite interesting to know, Mr. Ellis, that there are clusters of nerves located under the shoulder muscle. The pain is said to be quite excruciating." Hannibal interrupted, wrapping his hand around the man's tie, seizing him up by the throat to shove him back into the chair, "Let me know if it becomes unbearable."

"Please!" Shirt torn open to reveal his shoulder, a swing of motion, and the knife was stuck in behind his collarbone, the pain of it enough to make him scream. He wasn't given time to react as Hannibal snatched the tie from around his neck and secured one of his wrists to the seat.

He only just noticed Will in the room, and whole new kind of desperate, clawing expression found it's way to his face past the force of the pain; he could no longer feel his right arm, but the sensation was white-hot, searing like a burn. The blade rubbed against his bone when Hannibal pulled it back out. Breathing hard, his blood uncorked, he tried blearily to ask Will for help. His words were blubbered and frantic.

Will took a sip of his drink as Hannibal casually took off his own tie, and fastened the other wrist tight enough to snap it. The man was starting to develop a cold sweat, skin wet, gasping- like some newborn animal breathing for the first time, covered in mucus and shaking from oversensitivity.

Their attention on his suffering was that of onlookers, as if neither of them had ever known that kind of agony and were simply trying to gauge his response. Tact, detached. Ambivalent.

Hannibal, pleased with his restraints, wiped the knife off on the man's shirt and moved over to Will to collect his drink. Instead of taking up his own he took Will's from his hand, and Will let him. They watched each other intensely.

The air felt charged, accumulative, the same as the incensed winds outside- one snap of movement or voice or bone, and *then*-- he didn't think of what could happen then. Didn't want to spoil the surprise.

"He wants me to save him." Will pointed out, flatly watching the dark red soak through the white linen of the shirt. He'd seen the same pleading eyes on so many faces he didn't know what to make of it anymore. But he didn't know this man. Or why Hannibal had chosen him. *Better to ask*: "Tell me why I shouldn't."

Hannibal stood beside him and turned to watch, pausing halfway to taking a drink, "I was thinking of making a Louisianan gumbo."

Will took his glass back, knocked back the last of the bourbon and replaced it with what should've been Hannibal's: "And the *real* reason?"

Hannibal was more interested in him than the man slowly bleeding out in front of them. He looked at him openly, "His perchance for domestic violence is distasteful."

Will frowned into the empty glass, smiled mockingly, "*Vigilante killing?*" He breathed a surprised laugh, "That's not like you."

He smiled a little, glad to be caught: "When his stepmother found out you were a fisherman she insulted you." Will was left reeling, scoffed, avoided his eyes. Either reason was good enough. He looked back at the man and thought of everyone else they'd killed together, how it had felt. *Did it really matter why?* Hannibal moved closer to him, and Will leant back against the counter, like his presence was a physical touch: "Are you going to continue to observe, Will? Or are you going save him from me, from doing what you know is in my nature?"

Will thought about it. Then, he shrugged, met his eyes with such sincerity it could've knocked him backwards, "Your nature... dwells in my nature." He uttered lowly, wet his lips, utterly charming: "I'm not going to save him. From either of us."

The begging had morphed to confusion- it looked like the shock of the whole thing, and how fast it had happened, would soon knock him out. It seemed like the stab wound could've nicked an artery.

Hannibal stood back and watched as Will went over to their guest, made up his mind, and threw the alcohol over the man's open wound. And good God did he scream. Writhed, to no avail.

Will handed Hannibal the glass, in exchange for the knife.

The man twitched, looked up Will with the face of a man witnessing God, and breathed: "What do you want?"

Will sighed, "So many things."

And he attacked him.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, yes. The ole Will battling-with-my-morality Graham.

But, ultimately, he decides on murder. Remember that.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

> *The sheets, like their bodies, were incubator-warm and smelt of sex. Flashing images of white knuckles and hot mouths and the burning sensation of teeth breaking flesh. The taste of salt in the back of his throat-- he could still taste him.*

> In truth, Hannibal had hoped for a good outcome; hoped that the evening would reset them somehow. Will, apparently, didn't.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was a viscous blur of sound and colour. When Will slunk back to himself, there was blood all over him. The floor, too. Cracked teeth white amongst the red; some knocked out whole. A loop of intestine was hanging between the man's legs like a garland. He saw it, smelt it, through a haze of adrenaline, breathing hard. He'd gutted him from gullet to groin, just as Hannibal had cut the sleeping bag, like Rinaldo Patsy, like a butchered pig. The ripples of his actions buzzed in the air around him. Twitchy and dangerous. He felt wired. As if he might overflow.

Hannibal gently took the knife from him, touched his raw knuckles, still awed by what he'd witnessed. Such *cold* rage- as thoroughly inhuman as he'd ever seen him, it was almost like watching a stranger. But he wasn't.

It was a twisted justice. His wrath was always so sublime. Biblical.

The blood that slicked his hands specked his exposed chest. The darkness in Will's eyes was depthless- as tumultuous as the stormy sea beyond them. It'd be entirely wrong to assume that the man standing in front of him was no longer Will, as if he wasn't present and aware of everything he was doing, without need for excuses or self-pity to act on his whims. No more aversion.

Of course Hannibal recognised this from him, and had seen him kill in cold blood- had glimpses long before they had gone on the run; gratefully witnessed greater things since- but he hadn't expected it to come easy after so many months.

There was nothing to doubt because, clearly, nothing had waned. He'd been mulling the impulses, too. Lying in wait-- *ruminating*, even. Hannibal almost found himself alarmed from the outset.

An ominous silence stood in the wake of what they'd shared. There was a kind of demonic sexuality to him after a kill, like Lucifer himself envisioned in the form of a man. Something from between the shadows in Hannibal's dreaming mind. Unbridled. Unfathomable.

Hannibal marvelled- as always- a low noise rumbling within him as Will brought a red hand to his jaw, feeling the warmth of blood marring his face. Will looked like he could see straight through him, staring at beasts within, mirrors facing each other in the dark. He was glorious. Tormenting and celestial.

With the same lurid violence he'd just been privy to, Hannibal was grabbed by the collar of his shirt and kissed hard. He matched it, gripping Will back, biting his lip hard enough to make it bleed.

Will awoke early the next morning with his head on Hannibal's stomach. He was under the covers, shrouded, but not quite suffocating.

The sheets, like their bodies, were incubator-warm and smelt of sex. Flashing images of white knuckles and hot mouths and the burning sensation of teeth breaking flesh. The taste of salt in the back of his throat-- he could still taste him.

There was ventilation from somewhere, and cool, stiff air rushed in to breathe against his skin, and it felt like he wasn't sealed in properly. He shifted a little. Cuddled closer, liked Hannibal's thighs either side of his ribs. Briefly thought of waking him with his tongue.

In the bluish dawn light, and as his eyes struggled to adjust, he was barely able to see much. But on the stark whiteness of the bed, there were dark smears of blood.

It looked cold, a navy blue, like paint. Copper and salt.

He wondered if it was his or not. Probably not. But the skin of his throat was sore- other parts of him too. He closed his eyes again and heard Hannibal's organs working under his head, heard and felt his exhalations fill and leave his lungs, as if he was pressing his ear to the abdomen of a sleeping tiger.

He either felt or imagined Hannibal's hand touch his scalp before he fell asleep again.

Hannibal awoke alone a few hours later. It was beyond rare that Will could leave him without waking him, but he'd managed it, having exhausted him with their nightly activities. He'd been rougher than usual- violent. Bruises were already forming, his head hurt, muscles stiff; it almost made him feel old, but young at the same time, being worn and weary from sex.

The shower was running in the ensuite. Pensively, he got up, dressed in silk pyjama pants, stripped the bed, and took the bloodied sheets with him as he went to make coffee- or see to the corpse in their dining room.

But the body was gone. No sign of it. Not even a drop of dried blood between the tiles.

It was so clean, in fact, the whole ordeal could've easily been a dream, and Hannibal stared at the chair and blinked as if struck, almost dropped the bedsheets. Will would've had to have scrubbed the floor on his hands and knees. He must've been up for at least an hour or two. How that didn't wake him left him stumped.

"You cleaned up." Was how he greeted Will upon entering the bathroom, who didn't even flinch, halfway through rinsing his hair.

He swiped part of the condensation off the shower screen to see him, smiled: "Good morning to you too."

Hannibal smiled back, but said: "You didn't have to." It was more an accusation than an expression of gratitude.

Always so suspicious. And for good reason.

Will turned off the shower and came out, drying off with a towel. He sighed, letting Hannibal follow him back to the bedroom: "I can use the body for bait." He explained, conversationally, pulling on boxers: "You don't need to concern yourself. And maybe he will help me catch something."

Wait. *Concern himself?*

Just as Hannibal was about to question him, Will winced hard, and rolled his shoulder.

Interrupted, Hannibal eyed him, with something like sympathy, remembering how he'd pinned his hands onto his back the night before. It had been like a fight for dominance more than sex; his hands caught, back and shoulders pulled taut, fucking him until he begged. He had asked for it. Still.

As much as Hannibal was willing to accommodate any desires Will had, and fulfil them, he didn't normally express such want for real, lasting pain- not outright. He'd only done that to the same degree, maybe-- once before? Even in all the years they'd been together, it was odd. Concerning.

And Hannibal was nothing if not concerned about- and by- him.

He sat on the edge of the bed, and watched Will root through the drawers. He stowed away the questions for later, instead providing: "Will, if I got carried away last night-“

Will only scoffed, dressing, "You don't need to apologise." He pulled on a shirt and rubbed at his neck, in the same kind of discomfort that he had after the fall, and it felt like he'd been bedridden for months, muscles pulled and aching. If he wasn't being so standoffish and hurried, Hannibal would've offered to massage it. It was obviously painful, but he wasn't making a fuss.

"Did you--" Hannibal assessed him, "Do you enjoy encouraging sadism?"

Only a slight hesitation: "Sometimes."

Rarely. Hannibal knew there was something to it. He had hoped the kill would've helped them regain transparency, but it seemed Will had sensed that too, and sidestepped it entirely. Not even the masochistic sex had helped- as much as Hannibal was thrilled to engage with it, ever the ceaseless chase and sadomasochistic undercurrent. It wasn't easy to manipulate to him anymore, much less talk to him.

His violence had reminded Hannibal who he was; who he'd fallen in love with. He hadn't changed, but his behaviour had. And *that* could be manipulated.

Affection seemed to conflict him. Anger stripped him bare.

"It’s rare that you engage in that kind of submission."

"I'm full of surprises." He quipped, doing up his fly as he finally turned to him, inoffensively blank, waiting for him to tell him off or stop him or ask him something pointed. None of which he did.

Hannibal just sat there, hands together, poised. Looking to him with his curious affection, sweet and sharp at once. An untameable thing, so docile in his presence. It was easy to forget himself.

Then, Will came to stand between his legs- *God*, how he looked up at him, how he *allowed* him- and reached down and kissed him softly, pushing him back a little. Hands touched the side of his thighs, chaste and shockingly gentle.

And it was suddenly over, distance landing between them as quickly as Will took it away, and he went to leave the room, until Hannibal followed him placidly and asked: "Are you going to continue to avoid this conversation, Will?"

He didn't turn back to him, "I need to go and get ready." He scratched his scarred cheek, getting his shoes, "Have to hook a big sailfish by noon. Can't afford to fuck up another catch."

"*This is*-"

"This is not the time to have this conversation." He said squarely, stern but not mad, and took up his keys. He sighed gruffly, looked away from him as he left: "I'll be back tonight."

The door slammed shut and the noise rang in Hannibal's ears like the ring of a shot.

Chapter End Notes

sorry hanni :((

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

> *He could imagine what would come of his actions: an octopus camouflaging itself amongst a set of human ribs, an eel sliding through a pelvis, sharks swallowing marbled cross-sections of legs and arms that looked like brined pork.*
>
> Will uses the body as bait, like he said he would. It seems to attract a lot more than just a few fish.

Chapter Notes

> (uh I don't mean to toot my own horn but toot toot this is some of the best dialogue I've written) (just bc of how it could either mean she knows everything or nothing) (I'm proud of myself sorry)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will got down to the pier approaching midday. The sky remained overcast, a warm wind pulling even more clouds in. Thanks to the weather, the beach and surrounding boats were pretty much deserted, tours and trips cancelled. The sea wasn't rough, only upset. Congested with strength, crashing higher onto the shore and tearing crabs from the rocks, frothing at the mouth like something rabid.

It knocked his boat into the pier when he climbed aboard, spiting him. He swore as he almost lost his balance. Overhead, the birds gliding on the wind began crying back at the waves. It sounded like laughter.

He got the body to the boat in a bag used for Marlins, dropped in on deck with a thud, and admonished his shoulder by doing a few halfhearted physical therapy stretches. Only way out onto the water did he unpack his new customer. He got him up on the filleting table, and took time to sharpen his knives- especially the cleaver. Then, without thinking too much about it, he flayed and diced him. Just as he did the fish.

By the bucketful, between rinsing his hands with seawater, he threw the evidence overboard. Blood dispersing around the hull like a growing stain. It was hard work- not dissimilar to butchering a deer or a pig- and it made his muscles seize and ache even more, sweat drip from the tip of his nose.

He baited and readied the rods, washed down the deck a bit. By the time he'd cleaned up, his offering had attracted diners.

Surprisingly, he couldn't see any sharks, not even the reef varieties, but the casts further out were already getting attention. The lines quivered and danced. One or two little bites, brief and clever. Anticipating success, both anxiety and adrenaline flickering, Will made plenty of room in one of the freezers.

He added the last of the viscera to the water, and rinsed the equipment; it was shocking how easy it was to distill a whole human into chunks of flesh, in only a few buckets. With only some knowhow, sharp enough tools, and a strong stomach. It hadn't even taken too long- but then, it wasn't his first time doing it.

He could imagine what would come of his actions: an octopus camouflaging itself amongst a set of human ribs, an eel sliding through a pelvis, sharks swallowing marbled cross-sections of legs and arms that looked like brined pork. He shook the thought from his head, didn't look at the water. The occasional gull or turn swooped down and snatched up any meat still floating on the surface.

Flaking, disguised by the blood, it could've almost been his regular bait. Ambiguous. If you didn't look closely.

When one of the birds flew off with part of a finger Will almost had the urge to vomit.

It took a few hours of false hooks and landing small fish- the kind trawlers normally pick up, but better than nothing- and he was pretty much out of patience, when one of the rods bent almost in half. He couldn't remember the last time he'd moved so fast. It was a strong one. After fighting hard to get it near the boat, he'd worked up a sweat, but was relieved to find it to be a black Marlin. It must've been at least two metres long, and any bigger would've probably torn his arms from their sockets in his current state. Not the best he'd caught, but by God, it would have to do.

He managed to stun it before hauling it aboard, the fatigue and blunt force killing it painlessly. Spiking it would've ruined it's destiny to be a taxidermy trophy in some dive bar close by. Strange, to know he'd be seeing it again, bone-dry and stuffed, mounted on a wall with glass eyes.

The images of human faces interchanged with those thoughts, dead friends and victims alike, glass-eyed and waxy. The antlered charcoal head of the wendigo, unblinking. Will suddenly craved the relief of spontaneously passing out.

The events of the night before, and the darkness it surfaced in him, plagued him like black mould taking root behind his eyes. He needed to sleep for a week, or take a long run, or strangle someone to death.

All options were on the table.

He closed his eyes against the wind as he sat on the boat railings, trying to settle both his stomach and his mind.

There wasn't much of a difference between the hunger and the nausea nowadays. Both led to blood; none of which was his own. But there was a difference between fish and human.

He certainly knew which one felt better to kill.

Having got the fish up on the table, he made his way back to shore. The sun made a brief appearance as he docked his boat, the warmth of the sunlight struggling to make it's way past the clouds. He was thankful the summery, tropical storms gave the mercy of being warm- even if the rain always came down like another attempt to flood the earth. And, if that indeed was the reason for the storm: he had a boat.

He was so busy thinking about spending three days and three nights in the belly of a fish, that he startled at the sound of a voice.

"So, you *weren't* lying to me when you agreed that you prefer fish to people."

It was the woman he'd met at the party. Ardelia, wasn't it? She stood there in the sun on the pier like an angel had just descended down from the clouds.

"Depends on the taste." Will smiled back to her, threw the last bucket of water across the deck to wash away the blood: "What brings you down here? It's not the right weather for a day at sea."

"Yet, here *you* are." She pointed out, taking her sunglasses off and eyeing him, her amusement laced with concern, "Why's that, I wonder," He looked away, hating to be read by someone so new, "Hopefully, not for the same reason we met at the auction..."

He gave her shrug, closed, "Good thinking. But you didn't answer my question."

She was glad to see he was still wearing his ring at least, noticing it when he hauled up the Marlin to move it to the freezer, turning his back to her as he did so. The polite, kind look on his face now looked more like a grimace than a smile. Maybe she'd overstepped.

"I don't like taking people's word on things. I like to see things for myself." She said, as honest as she'd ever been, "So, I wanted to see if you were as good of a fisherman as they said you are."

Will put the Marlin on top of the severed head wrapped in plastic, "Not sure how good of a display I'm able to put on," He relocked the lid, turning back to her with another shrug, "But, be my guest. And we can both see for ourselves."

They drank cold beer as the sun still managed to gleam warmly, the wind catching their hair and clothes, the pink flower print of Ardelia's black summer dress looking like real petals scattered in a breeze. He set a couple of rods out with live bait, for anything that would do the honour of biting. Will had never felt the need to try to impress anyone with talents he knew he had, and he wasn't about to start. It didn't feel like a fish was the real reason she was there.

"So? Why did you take a social visit all the way out here, on a day before a storm, to test my asocial reputation?" Will asked, leaning back against the cabin doors, "Did I make that much of a lasting impression? Or did my charm and good looks not make it believable enough?"

"Funny." She breathed a laugh, watching the sea, "No." She smiled to herself, looked at him, "No, I think you just struck me as the only genuine person there." That hit Will as the kindest thing a stranger- or, anyone besides Hannibal- had said to him, in, well, years. Ardelia shrugged almost apologetically when she saw him stop to take it in, admitting, "Also: I want to make friends. I don't have many. I can't imagine you do, either."

Will scowled at her, feigning offence, "I don't know what you're talking about, I have plenty of friends."

"The fish don't count, Will." She countered, startling a chuckle from him.

Jarring to hear his real name. Even more so to have the prospect of friendship.

"That hurt."

"I'm *so* sorry."

"Big diary entry about that tonight." That made her smile, and Will finished his drink, absently peeling the sticker off of his beer bottle. He looked out to the water, "I'm glad you took the good part of what I'm known for, and not the worst."

"I know people think you're unfriendly. Rude." Ardelia frowned, "You seem anything but."

He raised his eyebrows, coy, "You haven't got to know me yet."

"That's true." She supposed, watching one of the rods quiver, "But we don't see other people as they are. We see them as *we* are."

Will drank that in, nodded, "Identity is a fickle thing. Even our own."

"We often think of ourselves as individuals. But we are... a parliament of personalities."

"Seen by everyone as an entirely different version of ourselves." He added, reflective.

"So no single version of you is the whole truth. As much as we try, we can never see each other fully." She seemed to snap out of it, raised her bottle to him as if in toast, to reset the mood. Will stifled a smile at the gesture, clinking their bottles together.

"I'd drink to that." He quipped, and she took a swig.

She then turned to give him a sympathetic smile, but strikingly sincere: "So, in that case, how can I take someone else's word that you're actually as good or as bad as they say? Without making my own judgement?"

He blinked at her, hit by what her words really meant to him, whether she knew him or not. Her kindness, and how it sounded like she knew exactly who he was and what he'd done, left

him dumbstruck. Then again, he never trusted that people could simply be kind- it's not exactly like anything he'd experienced in his life could allow him to think that. Not with all he'd seen; all he knew about people's capabilities- including his own.

It felt like she'd just shone a blinding light on him.

Will shook his head, disbelieving, and laughed. Ardelia looked surprised, "Something I said?"

"No, no." He assured, put the bottle down on the same table a dead body had been mere hours beforehand, and went over to get another drink, "You just sound like someone I'm trying to avoid."

Ardelia laughed a little, quirked a brow, "Oh, I can just go, if you like." She joked, pointed to the ocean, in lieu of a door.

Will matched her affronted look, challenging, "Are you sure about that?"

If anything her resolute expression only hardened, smiling wide as she said: "I'm a great swimmer."

Chapter End Notes

I adore the idea of Will having friends. (Sorry about that Hannibal). Especially with Ardelia (who's totally Clarice's girlfriend btw) or Clarice herself or basically anyone kind enough to pay him some attention. And I miss Beverly dearly.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

"We'll invite her for dinner."

"No, we won't."

Hannibal visits the markets, and comes back to Will, a surprise, and a meal. The result isn't what he expects.

Chapter Notes

oh my god sorry this has taken so long arguments between these two are really hard to write

In a bid to sustain normalcy, Hannibal went about his day when Will left- showered, dressed, made himself breakfast, went out for groceries. The weather was just about cool enough to allow him to wear a suit, taupe and casual. Nothing precocious. He wore Will's sunglasses when the sun peeked out from behind the clouds. Salty wind ruffled his hair and cooled his skin as he wandered the market stalls. He tested the ripeness of the peaches and figs with his hands, ate an overripe plum as he perused some postcards outside a newsagents.

The fruit reminded him of Will. The fragrance, of his hair.

As unexpected and witty as sending the FBI postcards would be, it would also be reckless. There were plenty of other people he could pen one to. So, decidedly indifferent, he got one that had a puppy and duckling on the front of it, enigmatic and tooth-rottingly sweet, so dreadfully unassuming. Maybe it was ultimately purposeless, and would remain blank, in a drawer. But it gave his mind something to chew on.

He then greeted a familiar woman, and engaged in conversation in French as he bought some fruit from her; gratefully letting her give him only the best of the bunch. She was charmed by him enough that her cheeks went pink.

Her blush reminded him of Will's skin, kissed by the sun, red and heated.

It was rare for him to be so preoccupied, his mind turning back to Will, and the worrisome thoughts that accompanied him, like a dog pulled back by a chain. Not that much of a shock. Will had a knack for distracting him unlike anything else. It was like having an itch he couldn't scratch, the uneasiness that came with his absence. The same hollowed out feeling that came with loss, or grief- someone that should be beside him, in his peripherals or holding his hand, just, not there anymore. And, even in his presence, he caught himself feeling alone.

He couldn't just will him to be there, no matter how hard he tried. Sometimes Hannibal hated those kinds of limits to human experience, musing that he should have the right to do so; to conjure up people to him like summonings, luring spirits back to their bodies. Like Hades herding souls. Even his own humble power over life and death came to nothing when left rejected by the one person he couldn't stand to lose.

He found that he didn't so much mind not having the control, as he did not having his company. It was more about not knowing where the power lied- if he had any or not, and if he could do anything to help the situation. In a lot of ways, Hannibal enjoyed Will taking it away from him, holding all the cards; but not when he was holding them so close to his chest he wasn't sure if he was even playing. How it felt that he was just being shut out, not able to see if it was his fault or not, both pulled towards him and pushed away with the same hand.

If acting got them nowhere, and talking was only prohibited if Will was initiating it, silence would have to step in to do the work for him. Hannibal wasn't about to get under his skin and twist him up and make him spit out his confessions, because he was too happy with what they'd become to risk killing it from the inside. His manipulation probably wouldn't work on Will anymore, he'd be caught in the act, and the resulting bitterness would just drive the infection deeper.

Hannibal didn't consider Will's behaviour to be a finality. Storms always passed. That's what he relied on, anyway.

When he came back- much later than he intended- Will's musk perfumed the air. A scent trail leading from the door, up the stairs, and beyond, like spool of unwound thread. The unmistakeable smell of their bath salts floated down towards him. Sweat, hormonal and sticky, then the lightness of elderflower, freshness, humid and bright.

The water was no longer running, leaving an odd silence in his wake. A greeting wasn't called out by either party. No definite indication of where he was.

Regardless, Hannibal began sorting away the groceries, filling space in the cupboards, rearranging the contents of the freezer. Putting the rest of the fruit in a countertop bowl, he took the bag of apricots he'd kept separately, got out spices, and a jar, and began to fill it. When he went to the fridge to fetch his pre-made syrup, he took the bottle, glanced, then stilled.

An unassuming brown paper wrapping sat on the centre shelf, a post-it note stuck curled on the top of it. With one finger, he pushed it down to read: *I'm sorry*.

Hannibal put the bottle down, took up the bag, and unwrapped it just enough to see pinkness. A white vein of fat. Meat.

He smiled without meaning to.

Will had locked the bathroom door. He heard the front door open and shut, closed his eyes. Pictured Hannibal's face as he opened the fridge. Undoubtably smug. It was rare to actually say sorry to him, let alone immortalise it forever in writing. Maybe that would come back to bite him.

He sighed steadily, the bathwater so hot it was just shy of burning, and the steam and smell of flowers made his head feel clogged with hot air. A cauterising heat, punishing and pleasant. It was rare he had a bath, let alone used their fancy Japanese bath salts.

In truth, he only used them to disguise the smell of vomit.

He'd been scrubbing the blood and grit from under his nails, looked at himself in the mirror, tasted stagnant beer and bile in his mouth. His sweat had made him feel clammy and dirty. The gore of what he'd done came at him in a rush that made him go lightheaded, and he threw up into the toilet. Only once, like a purge of thought. The sound echoed.

It wasn't squeamishness. An expression of neither guilt nor shame. More of a simple culmination of alcohol, too much adrenaline, and not enough food. It's as if his body had to get something out. He actually felt better afterwards; could've fallen asleep in the tub.

He felt unbalanced. The water hugged him, and he imagined himself floating, limbs gently separating from his torso, dissolving. Like he was adrift, his tether unwinding.

He'd wondered if it had something to do with the fact Hannibal had now surpassed Molly, and had become the longest committed relationship he'd had in his life. He wondered if it had something to with that length of time being a narrowing window, how they'd inevitably be caught, maybe even any day now.

Even the vague idea of a having a friend after so long felt alien. It also really showed how Hannibal had become the crux in his life, his centrepiece; the checkmate no matter what move he made on the board. He fiddled with the ring on his finger, thought about how it had been elbow-deep in the cavity of a human chest hours beforehand.

Hannibal had always made hatred and love feel synonymous. Like sharp thorns in a bouquet of roses, or the sudden vicious bite of a family dog.

But, having the potential of a friend only felt nice. Not necessary, or unnerving, or convoluted. No darkness. No tricks. Different. Intriguing.

He opened his eyes again. Stared up at the ceiling, wishing he believed in any God that lied beyond. Perhaps then he wouldn't feel so lonely.

"The woman you met at the party," Hannibal greeted, apropos of nothing, after Will had settled at the counter to watch him cook: "I saw her coming off of your boat."

Will couldn't help his smile: "You know it's nothing."

"If I knew it was nothing, I wouldn't endeavour to tell you."

"Then stop telling me." He said, sighing- the smile still at the corners of his lips, wanting to laugh at him. Instead, he uncorked the wine. He watched Hannibal sear the meat- destined to steak au poivre, with garlic shiitakes, potatoes, a red wine accompaniment; a dessert of roasted figs and honey. Classically romantic, indulgent. Will looked up at him to admire his concentration, met by his eyes again, abstruse and dark.

Hannibal wiped his hands on a cloth, nowhere near subtle as he offered: "We'll invite her for dinner."

"*No*, we won't." Will corrected, "It's been too long since I've had a friend. I'm not letting you near her."

He continued cooking seamlessly, cutting fluidly, the arrow not hitting its mark, "What do you suppose I would do? I don't know who she is."

"You know who she is *to me*." Will amended, knowingly, "That's enough."

Hannibal tensed a little, like a brace that Will recognised as offence, "I've never killed anyone for being your friend, Will."

"I beg to differ." Will answered plainly, pouring them both a glass of whatever bottle he was closest to. It was a sore spot for Will, not enough scar tissue formed, but it didn't wound Hannibal- he could feel guilty for the upset it caused Will, not so much the act itself. They were both well aware, but it was said to prove a point. A point that Hannibal wouldn't deign to address. He didn't even look up, slicing the mushrooms as calm as ever. Will smiled a little despite himself, feeling the need to put balm on his own sting: "You might be able to play well with others, but *play* doesn't necessarily involve sharing."

"Do you really think I see you as little more than a commodity, Will?"

That surprised him, "I think--" He sighed a little, drinking, "I think you see me as far more than that. Whether I like it or not."

"I do." Hannibal attested, eyes downcast, submissive, looking at his wedding ring, the meat, "And I intend to show you."

They ate without incident, both entirely focused on the food set out before them. It smelled delicious. Will felt a calmness he hadn't expected in place of nervous excitement, or a weird revulsion- having enacted the exact actions that changed the person to the food. If he'd seen the source, he'd look at the plate and not think of the face, as you would look at pork and not think of the pig.

But he looked and saw the body in the chair, the red seawater, the head in his freezer. And he didn't feel sick, or wrong, or uneasy.

Butchery was normally reserved for Hannibal. He'd never done that bit before, at least not for years- not in their marriage. He finally knew what that felt like. Perhaps that change instilled

peace simply because it felt fair. Equal.

Every mouthful was bliss. It was a gorgeous meal, the kind reserved for kings, explicit sin lacing each bite like citrus. The meat was sublime, tender and rich, cooked to perfection- they'd both missed it more than they'd previously realised.

Watching each other eat felt more overt than sex. Gratification and pride. A timelessness about the act and the taste, their past folded amongst the layers of meaning. It was a memory they'd both keep discreetly, behind a closed door, like a secret.

And it did feel like a declaration of gratitude, for more than providing ingredients. Hannibal meant it as a humble offering.

Pleasure worn like a pelt, Will sat back and took up his wine, considerate, quiet. There was a long pause of looking, something like the silence of prayer. Hannibal put down his knife, and Will spoke: "I would thank you. But I don't think I need to."

Hannibal smiled, feline and easy, "Having you indulge me is praise, Will." He agreed, "I wouldn't deny you that."

"You don't deny me much." Will mused, seeing it mark Hannibal's face, open and seen so clearly. As much as he loved to be known, so entirely and transparently, Hannibal went still.

"When you are in love you have no control." He admitted, reluctantly, not looking at him, eyes far-off, "That's what love is. Being powerless."

He might not be able to fool him, have fewer weapons in his arsenal that he hadn't yet stuck in him, but Hannibal was as aware as ever. As much as he would give him everything, even his life, Hannibal's actions towards him were always intentional; his curiosity or control hadn't waned.

Hannibal was *far* from powerless. Never had been.

Will basked in his gaze as it focused back on him. Dark and red-flecked and engulfing.

He scoffed, almost laughed, "I don't think so." He shook his head, still smiling, scowled at him when his expression hardened, "You can't control who you fall in love with. You can control what you *do* about it."

Hannibal refused responsibility, deferred it to him: "So what would you have me do?"

The look in his eyes. His offering of the meal, meant to appease. Will couldn't believe it, no longer smiling, "You're not hurting another one of my friends, Hannibal."

"I never claimed to want to, Will." He knew him better than that. It was close enough to a lie. Will felt betrayed.

"Cruelty is the opposite of love." He countered, sharp: "Not the inarticulate expression of it."

That speared them both.

Hannibal then relented, nearly sighed- refusing to look at him, "A dinner invitation isn't always an execution. I wouldn't be so crass." The rudeness of killing the guest was undoubtably dispelled by the kindness of providing their last meal, "I'm not threatened by you having other people in your life, Will. I'd only like to know who they are."

It wasn't unreasonable as a request. *Wouldn't be so crass*- implying that he'd thought of other more nefarious ways of hurting Ardelia, or anyone closer to him than he'd like them to be, and therefore hurting Will as a result. Knowing them only made it simpler. Will pursed his lips, displeased but not angry. He might deserve it.

Codependency fostered possessive behaviour.

He frowned, considered his wine, blood- thoughts of chopping up Ardelia on the filleting table: "Do I need your *approval?"*

Hannibal had got up to clean the table- deft hands collecting sharp knives- and, however deriding, the question seemed genuine, and he stopped look at him. Only a slight pause before he said: "No."

"Good. Don't send her an invitation."

Eventually, he agreed, with a quick, deferential nod of his head, reluctant at best, and went to prepare dessert.

Alone, Will sighed. Wanted to lie down in a dark room.

Hannibal wasn't a tether. Not a ball and chain. More of an anchor, stable, he knew what he was about, what he could do- how he could be used. He'd thrown him into the sea once before, and Hannibal had let him.

He kept him moored and balanced, but also wanted to keep him right where *he* wanted him. Will could feel either way about it: treasured and loved, besotted. Or adrift, insecure. Isolated.

Sometimes it felt as if his feelings for Hannibal needed to be entirely rejected, like a misplaced organ.

After dessert, he said he had to go see a merchant about a deal, reassured Hannibal he'd be back with a deep kiss and a smile, and left.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Will hoped no one was stuck out in it- it could've been him; a last minute fishing trip gone wrong, and the sea would chew him up and spit him out, regurgitate him too close to land, dash him dead against the rocks.

The storm arrives. And so does something (someone) else.

Chapter Notes

hmmmmm idk about this one but I hope it's good

The storm finally broke.

The wind clicked and lashed against the windows, pushing against the frames and the walls, like it was leaning it's weight against the building. Heavy clouds growled and rumbled in the dark louder than the ocean, crackling, lighting up a bluish white from the inside. And then came the rain. Torrents, coming down in great sheets of wind and water, blinding, unforgiving. A crack of thunder and snap of electricity would light up the island like a flashbulb, gleaming in the midst of such violence, bombarded on all sides.

The sea twisted and writhed, waves impacting high on the shores and crashing against the rocks, the cliffs. Long abandoned by any God. Reflecting lightning back.

It knocked the biggest boats around like mere feathers. This kind of storm was often bloodthirsty. Will hoped no one was stuck out in it- it could've been him; a last minute fishing trip gone wrong, and the sea would chew him up and spit him out, regurgitate him too close to land, dash him dead against the rocks. Another shipwreck. Another body lost to time. His skeleton making a home for the urchins and crabs. Or his decomposing body turning up beached like the carcass of a shark, mottled yellow and fleshy, losing form as it sags against the wet sand.

He picked at the sticker of his beer bottle, the music that once narrated the place turned to static, then silence; the rain making enough noise to drown it all out. Will thought it served as a better soundtrack.

It certainly lived up to it's name as a dive-bar. He'd only been in a few times, solely to have a cold beer on a hot day, or get some time to himself on dry land. It looked like a rickety den, somewhere to dart into away from danger, the few occupants happily drinking themselves to death in the corners. He was the only one sitting at the bar, right at the far end- but that didn't make him look any better, slumped over and unapproachable, bottles collecting at his elbow.

The storm had barely started and the roof was already leaking- Will had jokingly put one of his empty bottles under it to catch the water until a saucepan was put on the bar instead. He watched the water drip, the owner drying glasses, swilled his beer and went to take a swig- only to stop short.

His eyes caught and stared as Alana walked in.

There was nothing about Will that seemed like he knew her. He looked at her with the same nonchalance of a stranger- his expression unflinching.

No sign of an FBI assault team, or a bodyguard, or a gun. Not even a wire- he'd seen the way someone's posture changed if they were wearing one. She'd come in entirely alone. Defenceless.

Their eyes met, and he saw as she faltered. Emotions passing over her face like a flock of birds. And, as she came over to him, she chose to smile at him- pleasantly, as a long lost friend.

Will took a drink, avoided looking directly at her as she stood against the bar next to him. There was a pause of the sound of thunderous rain, then he said: "You should've told me you were coming, Alana. I would've got another drink- something stronger." He sighed, considering the shelf of spirits in front of him, "Or, hopefully, I'm already under a table somewhere. And you're not real."

Alana shouldered it, as if he'd just turned and spat at her: "Good to see you too, Will." Her dry hair fell from being tucked up in her hat when she took it off, rain clinging to her coat wrapped tightly around her. She unbuttoned it, and sat down on the stool beside him.

Silently, he watched her order a drink- a gin and tonic that would undoubtably taste more like vinegar and water. He met her eyes and felt himself be gauged.

"The last time I saw you, we shared a drink."

"We did. Before you let Hannibal escape, and ran away with him." She conceded, quirking a brow at Will's placid look: "Let me guess: was that for the sake of authenticity?"

He watched her drink, disappointment vaguely evident on her face at the taste, her lipstick sticking to the glass. Her disappointment always looked like disgust, like revulsion. It was either about the shitty drink, or him. And both would be completely expected.

"I thought I wouldn't see you again. Or, I *hoped*." He countered, viperous, "I'd thought that if we did end up in the same room once more, you'd be dead. Or dying."

Alana didn't seem fazed, just as a stalked antelope doesn't look fazed: "I thought the same. But I never thought about being the cause of your death." She mused, landing the blow, "With Hannibal's influence, I suppose you have?"

Will's brief smile quickly turned to a scowl, "Hannibal's influence doesn't leave you when he does. It isn't that easy to separate yourself."

"Have you even *tried?"*

"Well, he's not here now."

Alana smiled back, inclining her head with an awkward camaraderie, "Trouble in paradise?"

Will didn't grace that with a response. Instead, he simply offered, "You're pale, Alana. You look like you've seen a ghost."

"I have." She said, studying him with keen, assessing eyes, as if he'd dissipate before her: "No one knows what happened to you two, but they drew conclusions. As far as they know, Will Graham died on that clifftop."

Will scowled, "So who are you looking at?"

"I don't know." For a moment, Alana held the glass that was put down in front of her and stared at it, the cracked ice tinkling, unctuous and cold in her palm. It had formed into one solid lump, like a chunk of glass, or a tumour, and she didn't take another sip. She sighed and turned back to him, devoid of fear as she asked: "Am I going to end up dead? Or dying, Will?"

"No," He mused, going back to his drink, "*Far* too many witnesses."

The quip didn't strike her as a joke, "Has that stopped you before?"

"Before?"

She chose her words carefully, "I'm not ignorant to the things that have happened; Hannibal still does what he always has. I've been tracking you since you left France." Then added, "And *what* you left there."

"Who."

She clenched her teeth together, dithered. His voice echoed Hannibal's.

Unable to look him in the eye, Alana glared at the scar on his cheek, and Will felt the heat of her gaze without looking at her; felt the stiff tension in her body as she quietly said: "People have died, Will."

He let that sit, gave a shrug, "We got off to a rocky start."

"You *killed* people."

"I'm not perfect." He offered, surprising her enough to make her go quiet. The bloody pictures forming behind his eyes made his head hurt more than the alcohol. He wasn't about to sit there and be lectured about his moral choices, of all things: "Accusing a dead man of murder? No FBI to arrest me-- to protect you." Will queried, raising his eyebrows, "That can't be the only reason you came all the out here, in the middle of a storm, no less."

"No." She admitted, sinking in her seat uncomfortably, like she'd only just settled into her body, "I have a proposition for you."

He wanted to sigh again, "Which is?"

"Ten million dollars, and complete immunity from prosecution." Will froze like he'd been hit.

"For what?"

Her eyes speared him, her words nothing more than conversational: "All you have to do, is take Hannibal out on your boat. Put blood in the water. And drop him in the ocean for the sharks."

Will went eerily silent as he absorbed that. A thoughtful yet perturbed grimace marred his face. She had expected him to say no.

But he didn't.

When he remained quiet, Alana thought it best not to let it take up too much space, and she turned to look at the rain, "I was thrown out of a window on a night like this." The thunder crackled outside, and she thought of the black stormy waves taking Hannibal down; thought of both of them drowning in the Atlantic, off that cliffside. She'd had nightmares for months, of saltwater in her lungs, and the grim nausea of falling. It felt like dread. The sick, unknowing feeling hadn't left her since they vanished: "It's a shame you can't do it tonight. I think he'd appreciate the irony."

As if Will no longer had the capacity to form sentences, he only said: "When?"

"As soon as you can manage." She wasn't sure if he didn't know what to say, or didn't need to say anything. She'd figured he could always go straight back to Hannibal with it, but judging by the interactions she'd heard of, it seemed unlikely: "Is that a deal?"

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

The weather was so loud and drenching, his mind doused in alcohol and the weight of Alana's words, as if waterlogged- it almost seemed like he'd driven himself underwater. It didn't feel like he could breathe.

Will has to make a decision.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For a weird, drawn-out moment, Will stared flatly at the warped reflections of light in his bottle, brow furrowed and pensive. He blinked. When he suddenly stood up, Alana could've jumped from her seat, "Where are you going?"

He paid for both their drinks, face closed: "I'll sleep on it."

The wind howled outside, knocked against the walls as a thrashing animal, and Alana watched him go: "Like Hell you'll sleep." He went out the door without another word, and disappeared into the storm.

Blinded by the rain, Will staggered back into his truck; he soaked the pristinely dry leather inside, water dripping off him as if he'd just resurfaced from a lake. The weather was so loud and drenching, his mind doused in alcohol and the weight of Alana's words, as if waterlogged- it almost seemed like he'd driven himself underwater. It didn't feel like he could breathe.

The interior light of the car died out, and for a few heaving moments he sat there in the dark. Incubated inside, out of the rain. The rattling oil lamps and light from within the bar leaked out as an infested, garish yellow. Surviving bugs stuck to the glass, as stiff with terror as limpets cemented to stone.

Will closed his eyes, breathed deeply, and felt the fizzling effect of too many beers. A kind numbness under his skin. His blood, slushy and hot, thrumming in his ears. His head had already started to ache with too little water and too much thought. It was like moths had taken refuge inside his skull, and now, because of the humming electricity, they were fighting to be freed.

He drove fine, the headlights making the rain look like sparks, but broke hard onto the driveway, killed the engine. Before his view through the windshield was blurred again, Will could see how the nearby lighthouse illuminated the cliff edge as it turned, cutting straight through. He watched the spray of the waves lash high and sudden against the bluff, exploding like bottles thrown against the rocks. He absently wondered what happened to all the seabirds as he got out, tracked up to the house.

He made sure to fuss loudly with the keys, knick the lock a few times before managing to twist it open, and he fell through the door like an unsteady colt. Looking lost and drunk and drowned.

Will had expected to find Hannibal brooding by the fire. Warm glass of wine in hand, wearing the stony expression of a long-scorned lover. He had even stewed on the thought of him coming in to a seemingly quiet house, only for a knife to be put to his throat from the darkness.

What he hadn't expected, was an empty house.

The fire had been lit, but had since whittled and died. The glowing kitchen cabinets were the only source of light. Rain battered the walls- as if it might erode them- and the windows, too, cancelling out both silence and noise. If he was going to be ambushed, it would be a good time to do it. Yet, without having to skulk around or call out to check, Will could tell Hannibal had gone. If he felt his presence, his senses would rush to him, like being able to hear the low, rumbling snarl of a big cat locked in the next room.

But he decided not to care about where Hannibal had gone. Or when, or why. Not now. He didn't feel entirely present in his own mind since he'd seen Alana walk in and start talking to him like a dull patient she hadn't seen in a while. Trying to antagonise and glean answers from him; he should've asked how long it took her to think of those witty remarks. He could picture her laying awake at night next to Margot, not knowing whether he could hear her thoughts like a prayer, and thinking of exactly what she wanted to say to him if they ever met again. Thought about what he'd say back. Maybe she'd planned it for years.

That, and the possibility of attending his funeral. Or, them both turning up at her house with bloody knives.

She'd probably imagined any and all futures, considering how practical she'd always been. He wasn't coherent enough to think too much into it, let alone think about Hannibal. He definitely wasn't coherent enough to start worrying.

All he could think about was killing him.

He needed to stop thinking about it.

He took his wet coat off, hung it over one of Hannibal's expensive cashmere ones, and- realising how insufficiently drunk he was after his false display of inebriety- went and got out the last of the wine.

Will had thought he would be throwing up as Hannibal came in the door, but his body was so used to mixing drinks and undue stress that he kind of just-- slumped. The storm hadn't let up at all, if anything, by the sound of it, it had gotten more ferocious. His wet clothes had dried and sucked to him uncomfortably, but he lounged in them all the same, too far gone to shower and change and make healthy decisions. He managed to only feel vaguely nauseous after three glasses, but his head was made as heavy as lead, warm. His bleary double vision had since multiplied. His blood thinned, body comfortably lax and weighted compared to how upright and anxious he could be; the sound of rain, the darkness coddling him like a thick safety blanket, serene in his own undisturbed company. If he closed his eyes he could be in their house in Cuba during hurricane season, or in the cabin of his boat out on a oddly calm sea, or all the way back in Wolf Trap.

Eventually, his mind twisting every which way to stop himself reflecting on the nights events, a real, marrow-deep exhaustion settled on him. He thanked God for it. In his semi-conscious state, Will was almost able to chalk up his meeting with Alana as some kind of ominous dream.

Ever since those words tumbled from her mouth, he'd become determined to forget them. His body had ran the opposite way, but his mind had been left on that bar like that rain-filled saucepan, the conversation coming back to him again and again like a drip, like some kind of water torture.

He knew his sobriety gave him a clear enough head to act, so, essentially, he had disarmed himself.

God, he *needed* to stop thinking about it.

Hannibal hadn't reappeared, and Will was suitably drunk enough to not think of much else but shedding blood, and going to sleep. He quietly reflected that both were equally innate and horrifying, in his experience.

But he'd done well to nearly anaesthetise himself, considering. With great effort, he prized himself from the armchair and hauled himself up to bed. Walking up the stairs reminded him of climbing a sand dune. It would shock anyone that he could still walk. Realistically, he might well be under a table somewhere, dreaming of other old friends he'd rather forget.

Reasonably sedated, Will left his salted clothes in a pile by the bed, and fell into a heap as soon as he touched the mattress. His sleep was cloudy and deep, fractured by waking up from the cold. Then a loud crash of a tree falling, thunder. The third time he woke up, Hannibal still wasn't in bed with him, it was still raining, and it had started to get light outside. Will just turned over groggily and went back to sleep. He dreamt of dead bodies being carried into their home and piled up in the middle of the floor.

Chapter End Notes

I'll just send a text to Hannibal real quick and ask him where he is brb

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

“Any cravings to demand?”

“Human flesh.”

Will fights with his intuition and his hangover. Hannibal remains mysterious.

Chapter Notes

Honey, I’m home. I’m back from the dead, Hell is cold. I got a whole ass Art degree in the meantime. That’s not important- time to get back to what is, which is Hannibal fanfiction. Thank you for you for your everlasting patience. (It’s been 3 fucking years only feels like 3 months somehow what a sick joke dude, genuinely didn’t think it had been that long, I’m sorry if you’ve ever wondered where I went).

Many things to come. I might revisit some old unfinished stuff like my Interview with a Vampire AU, certainly my ongoing series stuff. Please come along for the ride. I would thoroughly appreciate it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will awoke as if he’d been swimming, or floating in water. His face was smushed against the pillow in such a way that it caused him to wake up with a start, and then immediately groaned at the weight of his head, flopping face down again. The sunlight split the half-closed curtains and had warmed the bed next to him. His brain felt like it was about to start leaking from his eyes. He turned away from the light and was about to convince himself to fall back asleep again until he noticed a glass of water on the bedside table. That, and his rain-soaked clothes had evaporated.

He sighed, drastically over-sensitised, exhausted, and swallowed down the absurd urge to cry. Fortunately, his hangover promptly smothered any readily occurring thoughts of the tropical rainstorm aftermath, and Hannibal’s nightly whereabouts, and, funnily enough, Alana fucking Bloom with her life-altering offer sat next to him in living colour as if he had just taken a blessed little kiddie nap and woken up in Hell. Nausea bristled in his stomach. He pushed his face into his pillow and groaned weakly like he was bleeding out.

He vaguely registered footsteps and didn't react to them at all: "Rising early has never been your forte, Will." Hannibal's voice was so soft, and his hand gently touched the back of Will's head as a means to comfort, which was immediately slapped away. Smiling out of view, Hannibal simply caught his offending hand and placed two pills in his palm. Silent, Will accepted them, turning over heavily, his other hand slapping over his eyes when the sun hit him. He felt the dip of the mattress as Hannibal sat on the edge of the bed: "I wouldn't advise that to be a substitute for breakfast."

Ever unnecessarily defiant, Will squinted his eyes open to watch him before knocking back the pills dry. Hannibal was dressed in slacks and a button down, offensively pristine for morning hours: "You'd better feed me, then."

"Feisty this morning?"

That almost knocked a smile out of him, and he rubbed his eyes, pinched the bridge of his nose against a reactionary throb of a migraine, "Not so loud."

Hannibal sympathetically rested a hand on his exposed thigh, close to his knee, "Pain has always complimented your wit."

"Ouch."

"A loving observation." He amended, admiring.

Will hummed, noncommittal, sighing again, and not wanting to look at him for too long lest his gaze become either lustful or homicidal. Not that he'd be in any condition or mood to make good on murderous ideology in his current state.

"Any cravings to demand?"

"Human flesh." When the hand stopped moving on his leg he knew to reign it in. The smile that crept up on him was probably disarming enough, but he put his arm over his face anyway and stretched his legs out in mimicry of a relaxed house cat: "Okay. Whatever the doctor orders."

"Good." The hand on his thigh slid up enough to tense him up a bit before disappearing along with Hannibal as he left the room. Will snatched the pillow from Hannibal's side of the bed and covered his face with it, focusing on how much his head hurt to subvert attention from the beginning flecks of arousal in his gut. The more he considered his appetite, the more it began to surface.

Not even twenty minutes later, Hannibal returned with a tray of oeufs cocotte with spinach, and a side warm sourdough toast. Will accepted it gratefully, if a slight hesitation, considering how rare it was for Hannibal to allow eating in bed. The pain medication had worked well enough, and Hannibal got in bed beside him with an ancient copy of De Navarre's *The Heptameron.* Will made a conscious effort to not look at which story he was reading to save himself the likely insult. The food was exactly what he needed.

The wind still raged outside, probably bringing in new rain clouds in the next hour. Halfway through his food, and still not a word. Clearly Hannibal wasn't going to freely divulge whatever he did last night, but Will broached it anyway: "Did you got out before or after the storm broke?"

Hannibal only turned a page, mild, "Before. I left once you didn't come home within the hour."

It was a question without the framing and Will nodded around a mouthful of eggs, "I went to the fishery, washed up in a bar when the rain started. Waited for it to ease a bit before coming back."

"I don't think I need to explain the dangers of driving under the influence to you, Will."

Will almost laughed, came out as a sniff, finishing his food and sighing wistfully: "I'm always under *an* influence. In one way or another." Seemingly ignoring him, Hannibal stopped his reading and bookmarked his page, "I only sedated myself when I came back."

He was surprised Hannibal got up and rounded the bed to take his tray after that comment. When he paused after taking it Will blinked innocently up at him, his headache clinging persistently to the back of his skull. The look Hannibal was giving him was enough to make him want to raise his hands in surrender as if he was pointing a gun at him: "Why come back?"

The offence he took to that showed on his face, and it took him a few stuttering moments to even deign it with a response. It was less about reassurance or rejection, and more to do with clarity; Hannibal had expected- no, predicted- his disappearance. Perhaps he hadn't expected it to be so brief: "Why? Did I ruin your weekend plans?"

Of all things, Hannibal smiled at him, minutely, proud, the spell broken, "I do have plans. Not for this weekend, however. We can discuss once your pain subsides."

God, he probably reeked of whiskey and rain and sweat, too. Will just looked at him hard, Hannibal only appearing pure and polite in response like a dog at attention, and Will took a aggravated deep breath, pressed his hands over his face as Hannibal turned to leave the room, "Your presence doesn't help as much as the food." He griped against his palms, drinking some more of the water in an attempt to stave off the migraine before turning back over to rest.

Chapter End Notes

next update v soon bc I've already written the chapter lol

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

“That isn’t your blood.” Was Hannibal’s choice of greeting, having heard Will come in, shuck his coat, and enter the lounge without any indication of anything amiss.

The plans were yet another social event. This time it’s even less enjoyable for Will.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Somewhere far away from home, Will turned his face up to the stars in the belly of the sky and breathed clouds like plumes of smoke. The blood on his hands was hot. It felt as though it was coming off him as steam. His mind fizzed in his ears, the same cacophony as the insects that shrilled all around him, flies buzzing just past his ears in the semi-dark almost enough to make him flinch. He leant back against the bridge wall, hands palm up in front of him as if beseeching cosmic guidance. He was thankful it was cooler at night. Sensation was bright and loud.

He guessed it was around midway between midnight and dawn with how little else he could hear. The windows of the houses a while off were nearly all dark inside. It was eerily still. Summer night ambience. A barely-there breeze. The nearest streetlight washed him yellow-orange. He mapped constellations, thoughtful, and turned to stare contemptuously at the garish street lamp, it’s stomach-bile light offensive in front of the clear and starlit sky, moths and mosquitos swarming the bulb. His breathing evened out quickly, if it needed to even out at all. The adrenaline had begun to teeter out, exhaustion sneaking in and nestling down in the warm spot.

Painted over yellow, the blood looked brown. The gentle wind had let it begin to dry, settling into the creases of his palms and nail beds, and he didn’t know what else to do about it so he wiped it off on his own shirt and moved away from the light.

“That isn’t your blood.” Was Hannibal’s choice of greeting, having heard Will come in, shuck his coat, and enter the lounge without any indication of anything amiss. Will wasn’t entirely surprised he’d stayed up this late for him. It was said with the same tone as being closer to a “look what the cat dragged in” than an observation; a weird but not entirely new brand of fondness for Will’s evidential violent tendencies.

He seemed intrigued, and concerned, but not concerned enough to even uncross his legs from his position on the couch with his book. Will, for his part, seemed equally unperturbed that he’d entered in such a state, and came over to take up Hannibal’s whiskey glass.

“No,” He agreed, sigh long-suffering, “This is courtesy of an impulse.”

He was getting bloody fingerprints on the glass, nursing the drink as he held his gaze as if to provoke him. It wasn’t particularly effective, but Will could see the displeasure tick past his eyes: “Impulses bleed?”

Will didn’t quite repress the urge to smile: “Consequences of our impulses do, in my experience.”

An incline of his head as assent, gaze always deeply appraising, this time just shy of openly lustful, “*Our* impulses. The more violent sorts, yes. But that requires the choice of action.” It was as if the scent of iron in the air awoke something in him, and suddenly he was standing. Anyone else probably would’ve startled or stepped back but Will, mainly thanks to his slight daze, just blinked placidly and finished the drink. He always seemed so foreboding at that proximity despite being only slightly taller. The hidden strength in the breadth of his shoulders. Hannibal took the glass from him without touching the blood, leaning even further into his personal space like it was his god-given right, sensing his adrenaline-inspired sweat and thrill peeling off him as if remained as tangible as a low frequency hum: “As much as I can appreciate the consequences, I’m curious to know the action.”

Hannibal put the glass back on the table with a clink and began clinically unbuttoning Will’s bloodied shirt. He let him do so, hands at his sides, naturally pliant for him. Will broke his gaze only once to look at his mouth, Hannibal’s touch helping him relax as much as the alcohol, “Is that as close as you’ll get to asking me what happened?”

“Do you want me to pry?” It wasn’t met with an answer, and looking down between them at Will’s bruised torso made emotions tick across his face- a brief part to his lips Will could recognise as veneration without seeing it in his eyes. He untucked the shirt from his trousers and skimmed his hand across the purpling skin of his side without comment. Will figured he’d press on the bruise before it happened, but it was gentler than he’d predicted it to be.

“You already know I wouldn’t have shown you this if I didn’t want a reaction. I *can* predict your reactions.” Sighing as if kissed as Hannibal touched the scratch on his hip, Will shrugged off the shirt and dropped it to the floor, the muscles of his shoulders revealed: “You can infer the events that best please you.”

“Was this to please me?” Will, still not touching him, weighed it up, nodded, shrugged passably. Hannibal’s hands holding his sides felt like hot brands, “Trace evidence isn’t the best way you have of getting my attention, Will.”

Will leant back as Hannibal leant forward, nearly whispering, “And spare you the sight of me like this?” He smiled as the hands on his hips pulled him forward, getting him to finally brace his hands on Hannibal’s collar, blood caked around his fingernails. Such close attention it made the air feel thin, like how an animal’s attention is held by gore. Will didn’t back down from his stare, unforgivingly rapt, and shook his head despite himself, “This isn’t foreplay.” It was said a hairsbreadth away from kissing, the heat of the kiss already there.

“Not conventionally.” Hannibal near-whispered, condescending, kissing him hungrily and pulling him in with it.

Flittering yellow light and swimming street-lamps mirrored on a crashing nighttime ocean and the noises of bone thuds giving way to wet hot flesh between the heavy breathing of exertion. Intercut blips of killing and kissing, sensation warping, that yellow light like getting caught standing in front of oncoming headlights at the edge of the woods with blood on his hands and face. Too warm. Hannibal's hands on his body, too warm. Will indulged him long enough for it to seem like he'd dropped the conversation, having enough of the visions he bit at his lips, his hands finding themselves in Hannibal's hair to then separate them, smiling again, cruelly, and pushing him abruptly back down in to his seat- not that it particularly bothered Hannibal. If anything he seemed entirely seduced and gave a soft look of anticipation, brows slightly raised in questioning when Will didn't immediately get in his lap, instead standing over him half naked, residual signs of violence hanging off him, dark and threatening.

He imagined him with a halo of light about his head, shadowy and haunting like this, almost scary. Would've been, if it wasn't so alluring. Will sighed again, a steadying breath, and put his hands in his pockets, rolling his right shoulder. He looked down at his shirt crumpled on the tile floor, blood mostly dry by now, considering, "You can recognise his smell on me, can't you?"

"Yes." Hannibal settled back into his seat, hands to himself, observing serenely as Will knocked his legs wider open to stand between them, still looming over him. Will looked off to the window, "How do you feel?"

He barely paused for thought, still not looking at him, "Possessive." In a strange assurance, Hannibal slid a hand around the back of Will's thigh and Will's gaze sliced back down to him.

"Jealous or protective?"

Will's gaze was inscrutable, watching him before simply saying: "Both." Hannibal absorbed the response, and sat back in his seat. Will, released from Hannibal's inquiry, moved off to wash the evidence from his skin.

They'd been to an opera a week prior. A man had lingered in his handshake to greet Hannibal, had held Hannibal's bicep, and flirted openly over champagne. He had leant in and whispered in Hannibal's ear, and Will had hunted him for sport for the transgression.

He didn't sleep in the same bed as Hannibal after washing up, his scent lingering on the air like dust motes, still sifting through in the morning when Hannibal followed the trail downstairs to find him sitting at the dining table dressed for the day. Weather more humid, the back door was open, veil-like curtain flitting in the wind, welcoming in the smell of the sea.

Being his day to cook, Will had made eggs and sausage with toast, a plate awaiting Hannibal still warm when he came down in just his pyjama slacks. He'd timed it perfectly for their routine, as always. Will looked up from his newspaper and took a drink of his coffee as he watched Hannibal sit down beside him, his own plate already empty.

Hannibal gave him a cursory glance, and started on his food, “Are we going to talk about what happened?”

A deep sigh and a click of his tongue, and Will’s tenable silence was broken: “For you to relish in my… vengeance?”

“Why aren’t you?” Will fidgeted, minutely, folded the paper and dropped it next to Hannibal, “You feel shame for the impulsivity?”

“Not shame. I’d mulled the impulse for a week. It was how it surfaced that’s got me so,” He gestured vaguely, scratched at the scar on his cheek, “Quiet.”

“How did it surface?”

It took him a moment to choose his word, “Messily.” Hannibal was pleased by that and he didn’t hide it, smiled right at him round a forkful of eggs when Will gave him nothing but a look of grim annoyance. Hannibal took up the newspaper with a flourish: “The body will probably be in tomorrow’s paper before you search. They haven’t found it yet.” Will rolled his shoulder and finished his coffee: “You can try to not look so proud, y’know.”

“Why should I hide how I feel? I’m glad you defended my honour so violently.” Will scoffed at him, felt the need to scrub his hands over his face but they didn’t feel clean enough of the blood.

“You can’t defend your own honour?” He smiled a little at that. Will inclined his head, “It doesn’t read as insecurity to you?” Hannibal considered it, very briefly, having already made up his mind about it all, shook his head, “You aren’t at all concerned by the implication?”

“If it was done to please me, with consideration towards my reaction, I’d say you’ve succeeded with flying colours, Will.” He finished his food, taking up his glass but pausing before drinking, “But, considering you didn’t allow me the observation, it seems as though it was done for yourself.”

Will looked away, emotions ticking across his face like film shutter stills: “Even by myself it still feels like you’re there.”

“Why not let me be there? It would’ve avoided my need to pry.”

“That’s actually not something you *need* to do-“

“Will.”

“Hannibal.” Another sigh, a stern look, “You don’t need to continue to delight. Showing you the aftermath was just— proof of the act.” He got up and collected the plates, hand lingering on a knife, “You knew what would happen, and I knew you’d get off on it.”

“And you did it anyway.” One final bit of hard eye contact and Will turned his back on him to rounded the counter behind them and put the plates in the sink. Hannibal lounged back, considered the tightness of Will’s shoulder muscles, “You feel manipulated.”

Will stilled and pointedly let go of the knife that had found its way into his palm, dropping it into the dishwater with a clatter, and resting his hands either side of the sink. He hadn't felt entirely present since he'd had the impulse.

He'd imagined Hannibal under him.

He'd imagined Hannibal's skull and face broken to a red and bleeding mass against the cobblestone. He had thought about it, planned it out, and killed him. He could do it again and it seemed easy. It all seemed too easy.

He closed his eyes and focused on his breathing to cool his hot rush of anger. A hand was pressed against his bruised ribs as Hannibal made the measured gesture of sidling up behind him.

Will felt himself instinctively rest his back against his chest before he could really decide whether he enjoyed the closeness. His anger felt like a physical wet organ within him. Hannibal's hands stroked over his bruises achingly, and settled around his middle on his stomach smile, and Will was trapped. As a heart is trapped between both lungs.

"I can't give you the platitude of an insincere apology, Will." Will was trying to focus only on the warmth radiating from Hannibal's bared skin, resisting the urge to turn around and bite him, "Your avoidance only encourages my curiosity."

"You don't need to be curious. You don't need to test my reflexes. You could've just asked me."

"I wanted to be certain."

"By forcing my hand?"

"Yes."

Will's palms flattened against the countertop, staring at a fixed point on the tile grout so he didn't stare at the knife block, "All the more need for my avoidance, then." Hannibal practically nuzzled at the back of his neck, his chin over his shoulder, lips pressed at the join of his shoulder. If it was an attempt to console him, it was working, and Will hated himself for letting it work. His scheming wasn't lost on Will- what it meant, what he knew. It was a demonstration of how easily he was manipulated, even still, and how even still, even now he was conscious of it, he would easily go along with it, as if it wasn't his intention all along. A fake-out, like a double dare. He wasn't sure if Hannibal was as close to the truth as his paranoia would have him think.

He at least knew Will was harbouring the impulse, and had for some time, and had purposefully redirected it onto a nobody, and Will had practically let Hannibal hand him the knife and point him to the prey. It was hard to tell the difference between his intentions and Hannibal's, and now Alana in the fray, her family- it was so much, like those insects, a chorus all around him in the dark. He wanted to cover his ears with his palms.

"Then I won't pry any more." It was as much of a compromise as he was going to get.

“This carry-on, or the manipulation? They were both you prying.”

A small caught-out but resigned sigh from Hannibal was as good as victory, “Both.”

“Promise me.”

A brief pause of reluctance, “I promise.” He gave a reverent offering of a shy kiss to the side of his neck, and Will turned his head to it to turn around in his arms and try to properly kiss away the anger that was left.

Chapter End Notes

hmmmmmmm wonder where Hannibal went before. wonder where Alana is. wonder if Ardelia is ok. anyway Hannibal loves forcing Will’s hand and so do I.

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

The profound sheaths of forgiveness and betrayal, mercy and killing, hate and love. Punctured all the same.

Will and Hannibal try to reconcile once again. There's omissions of truths, as always. Someone boards Will's boat unexpectedly.

Chapter Notes

shorter than last time but sheesh does this build tension

Kissing didn't work but the sex did; it felt like he'd managed to prize his dangerous thoughts off his mind like barnacles from a hull. It liquified his brain enough to lose the anger in the soup.

Will was glad Hannibal could still disarm him in such ways- not that their intimacy was simply a power play, it just wasn't defined by a sole purpose, much like a knife. The profound sheaths of forgiveness and betrayal, mercy and killing, hate and love. Punctured all the same.

Catching his breath and reaching back to have Hannibal settle atop him as they came down, he figured the whole split-screen version of their relationship hadn't changed much. He could still enjoy time with him and their relationship whilst thinking- and hallucinating- killing him. Independence of thought and being would always be a sliding scale. Neither of them could travel far enough away from each other to separate the bond. They had tried. Maybe death wouldn't actually be a resolve to anything.

Perhaps Hannibal was also showing him how easy it was to provoke the reaction in Will, and therefore replicating how Hannibal had interpreted his budding friendship with Ardelia. The key difference was the overt flirtation- he only wanted friendship with Ardelia; Hannibal had been courting. It's not as if he couldn't smell when Will was lying. More likely, it was a way to create a double-standard on the chance Will did pursue any hint of romance, Ardelia or otherwise, and the same fate would befall the admirer.

Of course, within years of both marriage and co-murder, there had been this breed of killing before. Any threats or invaders were culled. Never something that stepped over the bounds of outright manipulation, which meant Hannibal was somewhat desperate. Or, with how they often shared feelings, they were probably both silently pondering on the ideas of killing each other. Other married couples seemed to do that. Granted, there is a big difference between thinking and wanting.

“Where’s your mind, Will?” He smiled at the question, sighing at length at how Hannibal pressed against his back as he kissed behind his ear. Will hummed and gently felt the bite mark on his shoulder to check if it had stopped bleeding.

“Worried I’m thinking of someone other than you?” The weight of it all bearing down on him; Hannibal’s body weight on top of him. The compression of his body had been known to stir another wave of arousal within him and it was working. He pushed Hannibal’s shoulder until he eased up enough so he could turn over underneath him.

Hannibal admired him and Will quelled the urge to turn away. Hannibal’s gaze was critical but warm, “Are we to cultivate jealousy as a desperate means of flirtation?”

Will scowled, considered kissing him, “To what? To rekindle our marriage?” Even mentioning the fact they were married softened Hannibal somewhat.

“I wasn’t aware it needed rekindling.”

So he didn’t have to look him in the eye anymore, Will pulled him down to hold him, Hannibal’s hands pushing underneath his back to his shoulder blades, face against his throat. Will sighed, “You started it.”

“And you ended it.” Will opened his legs wider to better accommodate the press of his body.

“I ended you taking it too far.” He corrected, tone oddly gentle. Ideas of ownership and commitment and normal behaviour within whatever it was that they shared always seemed wildly indefinable. They both still had the scars.

“You think I won’t be reactionary?”

“You are nothing but reactionary. But impulsive?” He’d said something about an icepick in Florence before now, “I don’t know.”

The soft reminder of the teeth near his neck only to be admonished with a kiss: “This is a smart way of avoiding my question, mylimasis.”

Will smiled again despite himself, hugged Hannibal tighter against him as if at a precipice again, pressed his face against his ear and closed his eyes, and breathed out, resigned yet adoring: “Do you really think I can think of anyone else?”

They found the body a good couple of days later. It was put as a brief column a few pages in, no details in the press, but they’d had to identify him through DNA testing due to the severity

of his injuries. It was unclear whether the man's head was caved in or if he'd fallen particularly hard and the wounds were posthumous animal activity. Hannibal seemed pleased with the vagaries. Will took the newspaper to use it eventually to clean the boat's windows and decisively not read it.

Hannibal was reluctant to let Will go back down to the docks, but pacified enough to not stop him. He only aimed to be a few hours, just to check on it, see if the storm had damaged it at all- it had been over a week since the storm without having done so. Considering their reconciliation, Will was grateful he didn't insist on joining him. Having time to himself felt the same as releasing a long-held sigh.

When the sun and heat finally re-emerged from the largely cloudy weather, Will took off. The storm hadn't downed as many trees as expected and had been unexpectedly brief. Their journey to and from the opera house had been unobstructed by fallen trees, but he found that the sea was still rough with it, restless with energy like a stir-crazed beast. Will's boat hadn't suffered much, only a scrape on the starboard from a buoy that had become untethered, washed up, and had rattled between the docked boats.

The harsher sea cut business in half, but he still managed to collect his earnings from the market in the early afternoon, and was down at the pier changing the sheets in the cabin when he heard someone step aboard his boat. The creak of the wood didn't sound like Hannibal's footsteps. He hadn't been booked for any trips.

He took the knife he kept under the sink on his way to the hatch, and popped his head out. He came up the stairs and quickly folded the knife to slide into the pocket of his shorts. Ardelia saluted him as if he were her captain: "I didn't know to expect you."

He had worried she'd finished her holiday or Hannibal had killed her. Well, considered it, having never been told where he'd gone that same night Alana had reappeared. Would've made sense- he kills a guy that sets off his jealousy, Hannibal kills Ardelia for the same reason, even stevens. Not exactly the same wavelength, considering Ardelia is platonic and not intentionally provoked, but neither were a true threat to their relationship, either. A matter of semantics. At least it would've been mutual, he supposed, and had resigned himself to expect hurt.

Clearly he'd been wrong. Even if it left further questions as to what Hannibal's endgame was, Will was glad to be wrong about Hannibal, for once. Ardelia smiled wider, leaning against the freezer, "Nice to see you again, too, Will. I'm happy to be a surprise."

"Happy to be surprised." Will smiled, leant back against the console, confused, "You here to test my skills again?"

"Hm, not quite." She slipped a hand onto her shoulder bag and pulled out a bottle of whiskey, holding it out and presenting it like a waiter: "Figured I should return the favour to thank you for the drinks." Will breathed a laugh, considering, looked past her at the docks. She dithered with her bag, "If you're expecting customers I can come back? I don't mean to commandeer."

Will fidgeted, checked his watch, smile faltering a little, but relaxed with a sigh and turned around to check the gauges, "We have a couple hours."

“You’re a saint, Will.”

That startled a laugh from him. He turned on the engine and offered her fond look as he moved past her to untie the moorings, “Never heard that one before.” He turned his back and she eyed the lock on the freezer behind her.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Will already felt complicated enough emotions about making and keeping friends, let alone factoring in a husband that would like to be making his friends into keepsakes.

There is a revelation. And it turns out Hannibal has had a secret all along.

Will set up the rods just on the off chance he'd catch anything, but considering the waves he doubted it would dredge up much. The boat rocked and swayed a little, but it wasn't nauseating. The sun cut out from some clouds and he readjusted his sun hat, taking a sip of whiskey.

They'd both settled on sun loungers on the deck, and Ardelia had cracked open the bottle, handing Will his glass as he approached. She had since spoken at length about her plans to open up a stall at the market- something about a keen interest in stained glass and semi-precious stone jewellery: "Are we talking, like, earrings?"

She shrugged, made a non-committal noise, "Sure. I was thinking more necklace and bracelet stuff, y'know, the type of eclectic shiny things rich American white folks like to flash after a holiday."

"Throw in some silk scarves, or something. Grandmother type. Or, maybe, um, brooches. Could run your own shop."

"Yes! See? You get it." She enthused, the ice clinking in her glass as she gestured, "I can always make you some earrings, though." She teased, looking at him over the rim of her sunglasses.

"As long as they brought out the colour of my eyes." He joked, dry, making her giggle, "Are you on holiday, or do you live around here? Strange to hear a British accent, I mean."

"Technically both. I was sent here as a business venture but ended up staying. Classic expat story." She rolled her eyes, pushed her sunglasses up her nose when a seabird cried above, "What about you, American? Samael from here? Romantic getaway?"

Will shrugged, swapped his drink to his other hand to fiddle with his wedding band, "Honeymoon gone wrong- or right, I suppose." He really didn't want to think too much about Hannibal whilst on his boat. He kept getting this absurd feeling Hannibal was aboard and would emerge any moment; as if their hangout prompted jealousy enough to enact betrayal.

Will already felt complicated enough emotions about making and keeping friends, let alone factoring in a husband that would like to be making his friends into keepsakes.

Ardelia raised her glass and inclined her head innocently, “Here’s to Paradise found.”

He shared an unenthusiastic smile, clinked their drinks together, and conceded: “Paradise found.”

She sighed blissfully, probably feeling the wash of warm whiskey and cool wind as nothing but relaxing, watching one of the rods shiver with the breeze or fleeting fish activity: “I was just going to leave the bottle on your boat, considering I haven’t seen you down here for a couple of weeks now.”

Will furrowed his brow, drinking, “You checked the dock?”

“Don’t look so worried. Only a couple times, when I go to the market.” It troubled Will out of both suspicion and guilt.

“Don’t go out of your way for me. You didn’t even need to get such a nice bottle.” He punctuated it anyway by pouring himself another round, admiring the label, “I would’ve accepted lighter fluid- maybe enjoyed it; makes a change from such expensive wines.”

“What can I say. I’m an artist. Liver damage is my art.” Will liked that she made him laugh. The whiskey was beginning to make him feel strangely tired. He probably just wasn’t used to this sort of drinking anymore. She offered her glass to him and he poured her another as well: “Expensive wines, huh? How is Samael?”

No avoiding thoughts of Hannibal, it seemed: “Good. Still dragging me to public art events. We went to a private showing of Tosca a week or so ago.”

“Any good?”

Will shrugged, it had been apt if anything but the sentiment wouldn’t be understood by her, “If by good you mean esoteric, then yes.”

“Do you speak Italian?”

“Not enough.”

“Well, it’s not like I can imagine him enjoying fish guts and sun loungers, so I can’t judge.” Will bit his tongue before he made a quip about how she would be surprised by how much he does enjoy guts, scratching at his stomach, “Would you even tell me if things were bad? Are we friendly enough yet?” She seemed pleasantly drunk and soft with affection, but Will couldn’t help bristling at the inquiry.

“Would *you?* Why do you like day-drinking on my boat so much?”

She sighed yet again, less blissful, “I enjoy drinking, it just so happens it’s daytime and I’m on a boat.” She laughed a little, shrugged playfully, “I don’t know. You seem friendly enough. You’re good drinking company, at least.”

It was Will's turn to sigh, "Much obliged."

She inspected her own glass, "This makes it easier to be social, and easier to ignore things." She then put the glass down and sat up: "Less easy to ignore my bladder, though."

"It's to the left of the stairs." She thanked him and took a moment to balance herself as she stood up, both her head and the boat rocking enough to destabilise her. Will put his drink down too, closed his eyes to the sun, and figured he would probably fall asleep if he wasn't careful about it.

Once Ardelia had spent ample time in the bathroom, she slipped pins for lock-picking from her bag and reemerged onto the deck. Will had slumped back slightly in his lounger, breathing evenly, sound asleep. She planned to play it off as wanting more ice if she was seen fiddling, but she crept back up the stairs silently, the noise of the ocean disguising her movement, and made quick work of freezer padlock.

Once she'd taken a few quick photos, snapped on a glove, she quickly put samples of the frozen meat into the evidence bags already prepared in her handbag. There wasn't enough room for the entire human head encased in plastic. The liquid contents of her stomach swirled at the sight, but she *had* already seen the case files. It was different in reality. It made her pause for a moment. The way the boat rocked in addition to the drink didn't do much to mitigate her oncoming nausea.

Will watched as she closed the freezer lid, turning away as she clicked the padlock shut, and closing his eyes again before she turned around to return to her seat.

Hannibal had begun preparing dinner when he got back, the sound of lobster shells cracking and the smell of something cooking beckoning him in. Will immediately went to the kitchen and put the bottle of whiskey, half full, on the counter top. Hannibal considered him, then picked up the bottle to check the label, and seemed vaguely pleased: "Did she buy this for you?" Will nodded, glum, "At least she has good taste."

"When did you know?"

"The art exhibition. She got us the invite." Will had suspected *quickly* but not *immediately*. He scoffed.

"And you didn't think to tell me?"

"You didn't think to ask."

"Hannibal—" Will turned away from him and covered his face with his hands to sigh instead of snapping at him. Apologetically, Hannibal wiped his hands and rounded the counter to place a strong hand on Will's aching shoulder that, surprisingly, wasn't met with reproach. Instead, Will softened a little, staring out at the back doors at the sun just beginning to set, and not finding the fuel in him to keep the anger burning. Hannibal had always and only ever been himself. Trust was slippery anyway. Nothing with him had ever been easy.

If anything, he was more mad at himself for not having figured it out sooner.

“Sins of omission.” Will mused, “Has your affection for me ever overcome your natural curiosity? Or has it just- never occurred to you to be kind?”

Hannibal, not taking offence, somewhat gently felt the knots of his shoulder, “Do I not show you kindness?”

“Kindness with agenda isn’t kindness, Hannibal.“ He thought about it, and something seemed to click: “I think you’re kind in the way God is kind.”

“What way is that?”

“That it is a human emotion that God does not contain.”

Hannibal considered it, always flattered by any biblical comparisons, just shy of kissing Will’s cheek: “Incidentally, then?”

“Mm.” Will agreed, rolling his shoulder and stretching when Hannibal released him to tend to the pot on the stove. He put his hands in his pockets and didn’t turn back to face him, the drink and events making him feel even more tired.

“This wasn’t a test of you, Will.” Hannibal assured him, placing the bottle of whiskey by the other opened bottles of wine.

“If it was I suppose I would’ve failed.”

“Better late than never.” He smiled, still met with his stilted aggravation when he turned back around, more disappointed than angry, “I never doubted you. You didn’t forge a career in law enforcement to improve your trust of your fellow man. It was only a matter of waiting.”

“Trust in my fellow man has been helped by you least of all.” Will pointed out, sighed yet again, put off by his own aggression: “I should be more present than I am. I’m not— doing so well.” He made a vague gesture with his hand. It was as obvious to Hannibal as the weather but it was still worth hearing, “I hardly pay attention to myself these days.”

“Presence both physically and in mind help us remain tethered to reality and other people. You’re much like a ship at sea, Will.”

It didn’t go so well last time Hannibal was his paddle; steered him right into encephalitis and the BSHCI, “I consider you more of an anchor than a paddle now.”

“Is that due to the martial commitment?” Will shrugged, frowned, “Do you avoid me because you worry I find you lacking?”

Will scoffed, finally calm enough to sit down on one of the barstools: “I know I’ve been lacking. You’ve been surprisingly patient.”

“I’ve waited for you longer than this, Will.” *Point taken*, “But I’ve never been passive.”

“Not quite.” He agreed, mulling over Hannibal’s passivity being more akin to submission, the latter still not entirely conceding control, but his soft spot for Will was the closest anyone on earth could get to such a thing. Will looked him, admiring and resigned, too exhausted to stoke any big feelings. He’d deal with those later. He was relieved they were on the same page again: “What’s for dinner?”

“Mousselines of lobster with Champagne beurre blanc and caviar.” He readied the plates, and Will opted for water instead of wine: “Dessert is up to you.”

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

She hadn't run away. Was she brave or was she stupid?

We get Hannibal's side. Well, some of it. Bedelia was right about him and the illusion of control.

With the weather hairdryer hot, and the house becoming lonely, three days since he'd seen Will, Hannibal made his way down to the dock. So he'd avoid the noon rush of tourists that Will so often catered to, he took his sweet time perusing the market. It was relatively busy. He was looking over the new stock of peaches when he noticed a woman he'd not seen before was thumbing through postcards on the stall he had just been to.

He observed her briefly, noting the tight line of her shoulders and a nervous tic of clearing her throat. She came across as a tourist with a good helping of confidence. He had dismissed her, until she followed him down to the scarf vendor. And then to the second hand book stall. And then, again, across the street, lingering by a shop as he looked over jewellery at a crafts table. He saw her hat move up and down in his peripherals as she glanced fleetingly over to him when he finally spoke to greet someone.

Hannibal and Will alike had been recognised before; it was the risk of showing their faces in public. The last time Hannibal was recognised they'd made a tableau that mimicked Moreau's *The Apparition* in an abandoned church forty miles south of their location.

In the very beginning, Will stifled his theatricality to prevent such immediate FBI follow up but even then he still let him harvest the organs. He'd have to figure out what reference he wanted to draw on.

But there was something about her. She hadn't spoken to anyone else. She hadn't made a phone call. She hadn't run away. Was she brave or was she stupid? Was she aware of the extent of his crimes? Or did she not know who he was at all and she was simply working up the courage to flirt?

Unless she was carrying a gun or worked in law enforcement or was just very good at playing dead, it wasn't smart to tail him. Even if she had all of those things, and snipers on the rooftops, and a guardian angel watching her too: it wasn't smart.

Instead of filing himself amongst the crowd to lose her entirely, considering his goal of seeing Will and the simple fact she was interesting, he figured the only true way to untangle these suspicions was to approach her when her hat blocked her view and give her a smile: "Can I help you?"

A surprise to everyone including herself, Ardelia didn't startle, "Oh, yes? Hi. Are you an arts patron?" She tucked some hair behind her ear, fluttery, "Sorry, there's this engagement party coming up, something about an art exhibition to raise funds, and you seem, well—"

"Rich?"

She broke into a breath of a laugh, caught, bowed her head and cleared her throat: "I was going to say eccentric, but, yes. You know Grace, right?" Hannibal inclined his head in vague recognition, "Um, older than you, jet-set, wears a lot of green? It's her son- or, stepson's party? She said she knew someone around here with a European accent and I'm assuming that's you?"

Hannibal was quite charmed, and he could smell that she had the anxiety levels of something being hunted for sport: "Yes, I think so." He smiled, genuinely, appreciating that her accent was just as out of place as his own: "Who are you, then, given you've been with the guest list? Is Grace indisposed?"

"I'm Ardelia, just a friend. And no, she's ok! She told me to gather people at the market whenever I came down here."

Hannibal enjoyed watching her nervously avoid eye contact and flitter over her words, remaining as inscrutable as stone: "Did she ask for me by name?"

"Um, well, I don't know your name."

"Samael Graham. We often run into each other amongst the eels and the tuna."

"Oh! Yes, of course! She's mentioned you! I'll give you this- it's got all the details," She fished in her bag and handed him a blank but heavy envelope, "I'm sure she'd invite you anyway if you already see each other enough."

"Thank you, Ardelia." He considered her countenance and the invitation, and put it in the deep pocket of his chinos, "I must be going. Give Grace my best."

"You're welcome. Sorry to bother you." With that, she smiled and ducked back into the crowds to weave away. Hannibal watched her go, then went down to the pier to hear of Will and his knife.

When he'd seen her come off of Will's boat he'd done the only natural thing he knew to do, and stalked her back to her home. He didn't watch her for long though, only further investigating another night, once Will didn't return home, the storm brewing thickly in the sky.

Before the rain started, he waited outside for long while before he saw the lights turn off, and she left swiftly, phone pressed to her ear. Hannibal had been breaking and entering before he'd even been killing, so it wasn't much of a task, although he hadn't expected to be given more questions than answers from the whole endeavour. Her flat was the only room on the

first floor, small. He'd watched another person leave the same building, seen a camera in the entryway, so entered into the flat from the window once there'd been no further hint of light or movement. It was one dayroom that had become a bedroom, a small kitchen, a bathroom the size of a birdcage. It wasn't particularly surprising in itself, if it hadn't been so empty.

The foldout single bed looked barely touched. There was nothing on the walls besides a mirror. It smelt like detergent, a Lake and Skye fragrance oil, and card stock. Her clothes were still in a suitcase in lieu of a wardrobe or dresser. There wasn't even a errant sock on the floor.

It wasn't lived in. Suspiciously clean. A coop easily flown.

The only locked storage space in the whole place- not that there was much to check- was her bottom bedside drawer. Although Hannibal hesitated about invading a woman's privacy in that way, it didn't stop him. He found paperwork where there should've been sex toys- a rental agreement dated only a month prior; insurance papers; a shoddy photo ID card for a security company which gave him her full name. Nothing especially strange. He moved the papers and found a case of bullets. *Interesting.*

Skimming the papers, nothing much stood out to him, aside from one address on a bank statement- it was only marked as the account number, but the payments were consistent and hefty. Enough reason to afford something better than the place he was standing in. He committed the numbers to memory, and, within barely twenty minutes from when he'd entered, he left as silently as he came.

Once the rain started, he found the nearest cash machine outside the local newsagents. The thunder rumbled as he opened his umbrella. The screen marred with rain, he entered the account number as if to send money to it. The account holder came up as the Verger-Bloom Estate.

Hannibal's mild surprise was distinct, but mild. He smiled.

The trees had begun to come down. He was forced to take the scenic route back, and the Bentley wasn't the best with difficult terrain. When he finally did return, sometime closer to dawn, he discovered Will drunk and naked, passed out blissfully, his rain-soaked clothes scattered like wet snakeskin. It was like finding a fish out of water. As man's ancient ancestors first emerged from the sea.

Hannibal put his hand to the back of Will's head, his curls damp and mussed, smelling of the ocean. He could've pushed down and smothered him. He placed a chaste kiss on the side of his neck. He cleaned up, picked up the clothes, and through the scent of petrichor and whiskey, there was a note of something else.

He wondered if Ardelia used the same perfume as Alana Bloom.

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

> *They'd already agreed they'd rather die together or by each other than risk recapture. He was hiding something- takes one to know one. Will leaned in: "Why didn't you kill her?"*
>
> They have dinner and they talk. They must soon return to the boat, for good reason.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will took a shower before dinner, changed into black trousers and a navy dress shirt, the blue silk looking black unless reflecting light in the right way. It reminded him of the sea at night.

Dinner was the usual sensual affair, all erotic eye contact and sexually tense silence followed by more erotic eye contact. Will sat back with his water, ice clinking in the glass: "Why didn't you kill her?"

Hannibal put his cutlery down and took up his own glass, "You asked me not to."

"No," Will breathed, almost laughed a little, "That hasn't stopped you before." A passable sting of remembering the feeling of his intestines in his hands. Hannibal had felt betrayed then. Had *been* betrayed. Will didn't consider his lack of action towards Hannibal as betrayal anymore than Hannibal's lack of action towards him. Neither had necessarily been planning specifics. *Best not to ask*: "If it was curiosity, it comes at the risk of losing everything we have now."

"Perhaps I should avoid the overused idioms of risk and reward." When Will didn't soften at the statement, Hannibal reconsidered: "I've remained well aware of her threat to your safety but considered it well with your ability to handle it. You are still able, Will."

"My safety is your safety."

Hannibal broke their eye contact, "Yes."

The manipulation into killing the man from the opera had been the test then, maybe just a confirmation of his faith. Bedelia and her ambivalent line about finding religion. *God help him.*

Blithely, Will cocked a brow at him, "Do you consider yourself a gambling man, Hannibal?"

He took a drink of his wine, angled his head and actually paused to consider the question, “No.”

They’d already agreed they’d rather die together or by each other than risk recapture. He was hiding something- takes one to know one. Will leaned in: *“Why didn’t you kill her?”*

Hannibal met his eyes again, stone-like, “Where mercy is shown, mercy is given.” That made it obvious the direct line of questioning wouldn’t get him anywhere.

“Mercy isn’t like you.”

“Is that your decision to make?”

Will frowned, witty: “Yeah, I’d say so.” With Hannibal remaining passive and dull, he sighed, forfeiting, “You’ll tell me or you won’t. I don’t want your best lie.” He finished his drink, shrugged, “I can only hope you’ll be merciful enough to stop with the unnecessary omissions.”

Not that he could really talk about omitting truths, but, well, it wasn’t all that necessary. He hadn’t had further contact with Alana, and he hadn’t made up his mind. It was a possibility, just like everything else.

“I’d only ask the same of you in return.”

“Also,” As Hannibal began clearing the plates, Will added: “*Stalemate* implies no action or transgression has yet been made.”

Hannibal’s attention shifted it’s weight.

“What have you done, Will?”

Will chose a dessert of pomegranate sorbet, all that vibrant symbolism of life and death- mainly death- and kissed Hannibal with the bite of the cold and the taste. He sat outside on the patio as the orange and red sky had already dimmed with the late emergence of dusk, the fireflies rising, and Hannibal, having taken off his suit jacket and rolled up his shirt sleeves, took to standing behind him. Will could read his simple lack of want to recline as excitement.

He looked up at the cloudy weather and wanted another drink, “We should get back to the boat once it gets dark.”

Hannibal didn’t disagree, “Do other fishermen go night fishing?”

“Not that I’ve noticed. Weather isn’t preferable, anyway. We’ll have privacy out on the water.”

Hannibal touched his shoulder again, stroking up to his hair, “I’ll be glad to share privacy with you once again.” Will scoffed a laugh at the morbid implication, taking his hand and twining their fingers, feeling Hannibal’s wedding band.

“Are you driving?”

“If you wish.”

“Get me a whiskey.” In an obedient mood, Hannibal went off to do so. He returned, Will took the glass, and Hannibal came to sit on the edge of the lounger next to Will’s hips as he took a drink. The same attentive and formal look to him as when Will was hungover- not quite a smile but his features softening towards affection. It was like he was waiting to be told what to do. He couldn’t help but stare at Hannibal’s exposed forearms, the veins in his hands, “It was nice for a while. To have a friend.” He sighed, “For something to be *simple.”*

“Human connection is never simple. All those tricky variables.” Hannibal slid a hand onto Will’s thigh and he naturally opened his leg slightly, “Simplicity can easily moult into absence. You would’ve become bored.”

“Don’t know unless I try.” Will argued, “Difficult relationships can become equally as boring.”

“Is this about me?”

“You’ve never been able to bore me.”

Hannibal looked so struck by affection Will wanted to grab him: “Bored by domesticity?”

Will made an unsure noise, drank some more, “Bored by difficulty. It’s hard to feel a lot when the baseline is a lot. It becomes very—“ He made a hand gesture, *“One note.”*

“With pathology such as yours, even your environment can be traumatic. Overwhelmed is then only,” He seemed amused, *“Whelmed.”* Will hummed in agreement, stared at the twinkling glass in his hand, “If you’d rather simple connection, we can get a dog, Will.”

Will actually found humour in that, laughing, appreciating the offer and deciding to ignore any barb included, “I’m sure I can rustle one up.”

Hannibal came as close as he did to sighing properly, “We can address the difficulty without involving violence.”

“That would be a first, I think.”

“I’m happy to accommodate more *first times*.” Will scoffed, eased by the alcohol and the encroaching dark and their proximity. Hannibal looked so warm and soft in the semi-dark, so Will sat up and kissed him, and Hannibal immediately held him close with a hand curved around the nape of his neck, almost whispering, “You continue to surprise me in ways I can never predict.”

“I know.” He sat back again, sipped his drink, “At least you’ll never be bored.”

“You’d never bore me, Will.” That striking affection again, all the love in his face, so raw: “But I can certainly think of ways to dispel the monotony of your stress.” He said, casually,

whilst moving Will's thigh up and back down onto his lap, and then sliding easily between his legs. Will couldn't help but laugh.

"This is just overwhelming the already overwhelmed." He grinned, leaning further back as Hannibal pressed his hips down against his own and slid one strong hand up to his throat, intensely close to kissing him. The air between them could've conjured great bolts of lightning.

"Would you like me to overwhelm you?"

"God, yes."

Chapter End Notes

teehee

Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Their codependency turned symbiosis. Synonymical with love.

He would have him kill him and it would be an act of love.

They go down to the docks. Ardelia is not very happy, unfortunately.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Either night descended quickly or Will lost track of time- the latter of which being more plausible considering the devastating orgasm Hannibal tore out of him. It wasn't anything new that Hannibal was as good at giving head as he was just about everything else he practiced, but it still managed to genuinely impress him every time. He never even gagged, didn't hesitate, didn't involve teeth unless Will asked. It was so disarmingly easy for him, he almost seemed casual, as if the whole thing wasn't making Will feel as though he was about to tear the seams of his skin and burst.

The grip on his hips meant Will could only lie back and take it, spare the last desperate moments spent fucking his face, begging nonsensically. The climax was so intense he felt like he couldn't see. He couldn't think. Perhaps that was the whole point. Suffice to say, he had been overwhelmed.

Will would've loved to blame how desperate he was on the alcohol or being so pent up. It was a good thing Hannibal was too aroused to be smug. Besides, the simmering afterglow made the air feel less humid, and, after catching his breath, it managed to wake him up substantially.

They freshened up a little before driving down to the docks. Will sat back in the passenger seat and his legs still felt a bit weak: "Do you think acts of violence have become our foreplay?"

Hannibal glanced at him, down at his lap, back to the road, "Hedonic reward." Will hummed in vague agreement, itched his cheek scar, so Hannibal continued: "Before sex, we enjoyed numerous attempts on each other's lives- mortal wounding in various degrees. It seems the violence has always come easier to us than sex."

Will hadn't been drawn into actually analysing those aspects of himself since the fall. His near-hyper-sexuality was just unlatching the floodgates he supposed. Since these fantasies of

killing Hannibal had resurfaced, and he found himself getting more unstable in terms of avoiding violent acts, he'd been wondering if the physical space he'd put between them had cultivated the emotional ones, and had then, in turn, encouraged his more destructive instincts. Some kind of deranged feedback loop.

"So, yes, then."

"Does it surprise you?"

"Not really." He admitted, quiet, "Even as my agency dissipates, I act under the illusion that I have it. Sometimes it's hard to know if I'm mimicking your sadism, or if it's my own. Like I'm only doing what you'd want me to do."

"I think it's a disservice to yourself to consider it." He wasn't rude when he asked: "Is it easier for you, if all your actions are my fault?"

"It's not that." Will shifted in his seat: "I don't think it changes as much as I would want it to." Feeling guilty of his crimes, feeling guilty of his hatred; roses and thorns, lips and teeth. Their codependency turned symbiosis. Synonymical with love.

He would have him kill him and it would be an act of love.

As if telepathic, Hannibal simply said: "You don't need to do anything to make me want you, Will. It is eternal."

It hurt to hear, in some way. It was hard to accept. Unsurprising that killing him had always seemed so much easier than kissing him.

He sighed, considered his wedding ring when he turned down the radio, finally looking over at him, "Does it ever annoy you?"

"Eternity does not always invoke tedium."

"No, I mean does it ever annoy you the violence is easier than the sex? Is that ideal for you?" Hannibal blinked in the way he often did when genuinely mulling over something, as if finding words on a page.

"I've always desired to be loved as I am. And I am violent." The asphalt changed to a sand road, "I understand cruelty more intimately than I understand sexuality; from myself and from others. Do I sound as if I'm only speaking for myself?" He looked at Will, and it encouraged a smile, "You aren't alone in that, Will. We are just alike, after all. Though I don't have frustration for fulfilling authentic behaviours."

"Your nature dwells in my nature. I don't have shame for that."

"But you do have shame?"

"One of us has to." Will quipped, then sighed again as Hannibal turned into the parking lot, "I'd have no impulse control left without some level of it."

“I enjoy your impulses.” Hannibal smiled, feline, and Will rolled his eyes.

“I know. But I don’t need the encouragement.”

Fluidly, Hannibal pulled into a spot, turned off the ignition, and opened the door to the smell and sound of the restless ocean before Will could entirely process. He paused before getting out: “Thank you for telling me the truth, Will. I’m glad to be here.”

“Only because you want to watch me kill.” Will huffed, getting out of the car.

“Is that what we’re doing?” Hannibal queried, as if completely innocent of the mountains of murder charges on his criminal record. The click and flash of light of Hannibal locking the vehicle illuminated Will’s unimpressed glare as he rounded the car.

“I haven’t decided yet.” He grumbled, moving past Hannibal, who followed him happily and entirely unhurried.

“And here I thought we were becoming friends, Will.” Is what Ardelia immediately said when Will ripped the tape off of her mouth, finally able to sit up a little within the freezer. The ice had melted somewhat, just enough for the meat to begin to thaw, the cooled smell of rot and fish flooding out. Her voice was hoarse.

“Seems I was becoming your *suspect*.”

“I didn’t want to be right.” She huffed, tried to stretch her shoulders as much as she could with the lid open and how her hands were taped behind her, but didn’t struggle. Her dress was ruined. Her neck still hurt, “Just when I found a good drinking buddy. Shame. You should’ve gotten rid of it.”

“Well, then, we’ve both been caught.” He joked flatly, lifting her up by her arm, not ungently, and picking her up surprisingly easily to simply drop her down on the sun lounger beside him.

She blew the hair out of her face, tried to pretend the manhandling didn’t scare her, and cut Will a rude look: “Shoving me in a freezer with a severed head and dead fish? *Really?* I’ll probably come down with something.”

“You’ll be fine.”

“Seriously? You should see the other guy.” She seemed way more casual than Will expected, but then, he didn’t know her. She sighed heavily, pursed her lips, “Why did you keep him? Who was he?”

“A friend.”

Ardelia scoffed, “Brilliant.” She finally looked as if the reality of the situation had knocked the air from her, and laughed bitterly anyway. Will was confused as to why she hadn’t tried

struggling more. Her attitude plateaued to solemn, her shoulders dropping: “I’m sorry for snooping. I know who you are… I’m only doing my job.”

“Are you working for someone?”

“Fuck.” She crumpled, adrenaline and fear spinning in her. She was surprising herself at how the witty humour defence hadn’t yet given way to tears. All the FBI training in the world couldn’t have prepared her for being trapped with a human head in dark cold box indefinitely, awaiting one or both serial killer cannibals to make her into breakfast. The fear was colder than the ice. The stench of the space had made her body want to vomit, eventually acclimatising so she drifted in and out of either sleep or consciousness. She was only somewhat grateful the freezer was unplugged. She reckoned it would’ve been better to die of suffocation and frozen stiff than whatever unpredictability was awaiting her, “*Please* don’t tell me I’m destined for fish bait.”

Will sighed, leant his hip against the filleting table, hesitated to talk plainly with Hannibal in earshot: “You might be able to talk yourself out of it. Who are you working for?”

“If you used an alias like a normal criminal, I doubt we would’ve found you.” He hated Hannibal in that moment, “I really am sorry for snooping. I’m only doing what I’m told- I can say I found nothing.”

Even with the betrayal, Will did believe her, “It’s not as if you have any evidence.” Will shrugged, bitchy, since he had confiscated the samples, and put fishing sinker weights into her bag before dropping it into the ocean. He’d kept her phone. He couldn’t accuse her outright, not using names. He was angry with Alana, and angry with himself that he caught Ardelia, too, more so than with Ardelia herself. She was just a pawn in their game: “You need to tell me.”

Ardelia closed her eyes. She willed her nausea to ease up. Then offered him her best neutral expression: “They’re tracking this boat. It’s in the bathroom, I put it there. Hell, *I* have a tracking chip.” She sighed again, seeming more apologetic than anything else, “They know I’m out here, Will. Don’t implicate yourself even more.”

Will scowled, knowing the immunity he was promised: “Why wouldn’t I?”

“This isn’t your fault, I know—“

“Why would she send you to— Hannibal. *Don’t.”* Ardelia whipped her head around to see a tall figure looming in the dark behind her, the light only just catching his eyes, down to the knife in his hand, glared back to Will with his hand raised for only a moment, then back to the dark and he was gone. Her chest seized. She struggled for breath, startled, searching around for any further sign of him. She couldn’t see much in the dim cast of the boat light, the deck behind her only vague shapes, the sea only shushing blackness. Void. Nowhere to go. He was in the shadows.

“Oh, God. *Please*, Will, I—“ He put his hand up to her, silencing her, pausing as if waiting for a threat to pass.

“Why did she send you?”

“I’m the failsafe.” She surrendered, serious, determined to live, “I was meant to befriend you, get close. Make sure nothing went wrong. To help you, I guess? At least, I was fucking meant to— *God,* maybe I’ve been bait this whole fucking time, *Jesus*, I’ve only—“ Then came the tears, hot and fast, brimming in her eyes, one dropping down her cheek, her whole body shaking. Her jaw worked fruitlessly for a few panicked moments, fear now raw on her features, then clarity: “You need to let me go, Will. They’d have proof it was you. I was taking that evidence to help you, I—“

“Oh.” Will breathed, the relief and heartbreak dropping the tension from his shoulders, “You either think I’m innocent or you want me to be. You think— *Oh.*”

“Will, *please*.” She lowered her voice to a rushed whisper, lips trembling: “I know there’s still good in you. Just- you can still get out of this, I know she promised you immunity but Ala—“ He covered her mouth, fixed her with a stare so intense she couldn’t even tell what he was thinking, glanced off to listen to a noise. She just knew to stay silent.

He whispered too, “She knows we’re here?” She froze, then nodded. He let her go, “How long?”

“On the hour. If I don’t contact her, they send people.” She swallowed, searched for Hannibal in the black windows, “She knows we’re on your boat.”

“Will she meet us out here, if I told her to?”

“Um, yes, I think so.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Okay.” He took hold of her hands in an uncharacteristic attempt at comfort, brow furrowed, and hesitated before saying, “If you want to live: don’t react.” Before she could voice her confusion, he answered her with a needle to the neck.

Chapter End Notes

Alana incoming!

Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

> *The boat light strung their shadows across the deck, thin like ghosts. The bulb buzzed with insects.*
>
> Will has laid plans. Hannibal remains patient.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Before the signals had converged to one spot in the sea, Alana received a call from Ardelia. Will's voice was on the line.

"He knows."

The line crackled dead before she could answer. She had a flashback of pain so dense between her broken spine she couldn't feel her legs, rain in her eyes, wheezing to tell Will to go, and him walking into Hannibal's house that night. She couldn't hear anything over the noise of the rain.

Will stared out to the great black sea, then threw the phone as far as he could. Midair it vanished into the void, a distant splash not long after. He turned to look over Ardelia's unconscious form, rubbed his cheek scar, rolled his shoulder as it tightened from the exertion, muscles pulled taught by his anxiety.

He felt a presence materialise behind him. His heart rate was high. Sighing, he turned back to find Hannibal unusually calm— well, unsettlingly so. The boat light strung their shadows across the deck, thin like ghosts. The bulb buzzed with insects. There was a faint awareness of the knife in Hannibal's hand, how he could smell Will's nerves like pollen spores amongst the saltwater.

"I recall this position in another lifetime, Will." Hannibal offered, eyes flitting between his eyes and mouth, as unsure as Will had ever seen him, his face closed, anticipating, "Is this a new revision of our past discretions?"

Will cracked a small smile, fleeting, eyes flighty, "Let sleeping dogs lie, else you'll kill them?" He recalled how his muscles tore further open when he reached for Abigail's bleeding throat. He made a face like he'd tasted something foul, met Hannibal's eyes assuringly, "I don't think I need to revisit. Do you?"

Hannibal cradled Will's face, Will's stomach dropped and he firmly grabbed Hannibal's hand that held the knife as he was kissed. He absently thought about how he'd had the bizarre

hope, back then, that Hannibal would've kissed him before gutting him like he did. He had seen the love in his face.

That occurrence- or lack of it- had faintly lingered with him in the hospital, then in Florence. The suggestion and denial. How it was easier to be violent.

How he'd replicated that tension before pulling Hannibal from the bluff. Always so cruel.

He kissed back, considering it to be crueler.

Hannibal held him at the back of the neck when they parted, Will sighing again, Hannibal's thumb on his pulse point: "Stay here, Will." Will wanted to close his eyes, to kiss him again. He felt the surging tide below them pick up: "You must avoid regret. Don't allow your hesitation to stop you."

He did close his eyes then, a rush of anger simmering up to grit his teeth together. Will considered how easy it would be to take the knife off of him. His voice was low and small when he eventually asked: "Why are you allowing this?"

He wasn't sure if he was referring to the love, or the violence.

Hannibal smiled then, all fangs, a look so close and fond Will opened his eyes to catch it, "This is your design. I saw your beginnings." He tucked his hair behind his ear, hands so gentle, "I'm curious to see your endings."

An emotion overcame him that Will couldn't explain, something profoundly intense and just shy of distressing, and he only knew to take Hannibal's face in his hands and kiss him again with force enough to push him backwards. He wanted to hold him, hurt him. He wanted to fuck him. He wanted to feel his blood on his face. Recollections of his previous orgasm, of slitting Hannibal's throat for the pigs, the pulsing wet heat of his mouth, killing the man from the opera with a rock like a wounded animal, pushing his intestines back inside himself; sensations raw and hot and unimaginable, all bubbling up, the madness of it enough to him shake, make him sick, make him hard.

The knife slipped into his palm and he wasn't sure if he took it or if Hannibal handed it to him. Their kissing turned to more teeth than tongue, strong hands turning him to be backed up against the filleting table, sliding onto it when it dug too sharply into his back, Hannibal pulling him in close by the hips, pushing between his thighs, all greedy and insatiable and instinctive until Will put the knife to his neck.

Nothing but them both catching their breath, eyes locked, mouths red.

The intensity of their shared staring could've struck a match. He caught the exact moment Hannibal understood the threat to be serious. He felt so alive.

"Tell me why you didn't kill her." Will asked yet again, rather indifferent, not wanting to slip into their usual vagaries.

He expected curiosity or avoidance or even something new, but instead: “You asked me not to, Will.”

It took him a moment to process it, but he was being honest. Had he really been changed that thoroughly?

It was all too sharp, too bright.

He experimentally pressed the blade in a little, fighting the impulse so strong it made his heart race. Hannibal’s only reaction was the slight part to his lips.

Will thought of all the times they’d looked at each other. If he’d ever be able to go without it.

In a blink, Hannibal turned off the light and disappeared from him entirely. Will, uncharacteristically relaxed, stayed put.

Some long moments later, the inconspicuous hum of another boat motor shushed the waves, sidling up to their own, limned by the moonlight.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it’s a small chapter! I wanted more tension before the big ending lol

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